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THE SILENCING OF SLAVES IN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS

Ronald Charles



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“Ronald Charles is an important voice in the study of early Christian slavery. A postcolonial historian of antiquity, he situates his investigation of slave characters in Jewish and Christian writings in the theoretical context of subaltern studies. Instead of perpetuating grand narratives, he deliberately concentrates on small tales. Attentive to the voices of ancient slaves and the silences of modern historians and theologians, Charles joins the chorus of those who insist we finally hear the voices of those who cry for justice on behalf of those they love.”

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THE SILENCING OF SLAVES IN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS

The Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Christian Texts analyzes a large corpus of early Christian texts and Pseudepigraphic materials to understand how the authors of these texts used, abused and silenced enslaved characters to articulate their own social, political and theological visions.

The focus is on excavating the texts “from below” or “against the grain” in order to *notice* the slaves, and in so doing, to problematize and (re)imagine the narratives. Noticing the slaves as literary iterations means paying attention to broader theological, ideological and rhetorical aims of the texts within which enslaved bodies are constructed. The analysis demonstrates that by silencing slaves and using a rhetoric of violence, the authors of these texts contributed to the construction of myths in which slaves functioned as a useful trope to support the combined power of religion and empire. Thus was created not only the perfect template for the rise and development of a Christian discourse of slavery, but also a rationale for subsequent violence exercised against slave bodies within the Christian Empire.

The study demonstrates the value of using the tools and applying the insights of subaltern studies to the study of the Pseudepigrapha and in early Christian texts. This volume will be of interest not only to scholars of early Christianity, but also to those working on the history of slavery and subaltern studies in antiquity.

Ronald Charles is Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department at St. Francis Xavier University, Canada.

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Ronald Charles

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ABBREVIATIONS

Primary sources

Aeschylus	<i>Eumenides</i>
Cassius Dio	<i>Hist. Rom. Historia Romana</i>
Clement, <i>Paed.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Paedagogus</i>
Clement, <i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromata</i>
<i>Dig.</i>	<i>Digest of Justinian</i>
Euripides	Bacchae
Eusebius, <i>HE</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica/Ecclesiastical History</i>
Gal.	Galatians
Irenaeus	<i>Adv. Haer.</i>
	<i>Adversus Haereses</i>
<i>Jos. Asen</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
Josephus	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Jub</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>Juv. Sat.</i>	<i>Juvenal Satires</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Mart. Perpt.	Martyrdom of Perpetua
Mat.	Matthew
<i>M. Polyc.</i>	<i>Martyrium Polycarpi</i>
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i>
Plutarch	<i>Life of Cato the Elder:</i>
	<i>Life of Lycurgus</i>
Seneca	<i>Epistulae morales/Epistles</i>
Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
<i>T. Benj.</i>	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>
<i>T. Jos.</i>	<i>Testament of Joseph</i>
<i>T. Reu.</i>	<i>Testament of Reuben</i>
<i>T. Sim.</i>	<i>Testament of Simeon</i>
<i>T. Zeb.</i>	<i>Testament of Zebulon</i>
Tacitus	<i>Ann. Annales:</i>
	<i>Hist. Historiae</i>

ABBREVIATIONS

Tertullian	<i>Adv. Marc.</i> <i>Adversus Marcionem</i>
Xenophon	<i>Constitution of the Lacedaemonians</i>

Secondary sources

<i>AJS</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>ETR</i>	<i>Études théologiques et religieuses</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSJS</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism, Supplement</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Religion and Society</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LF</i>	<i>Library of the Fathers</i>
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTApoc</i>	<i>New Testament Apocrypha</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
SB	Sources Bibliques
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Studies. Dissertation Series
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
<i>SCI</i>	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
SR	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses</i>

ABBREVIATIONS

VTs	Vetus Testamentus, Supplement
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>



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INTRODUCTION

Although slaves constituted an important social group in the composition of earliest Christ-groups, their bodies have been taken for granted in the myth-making/social construction process of early Christian discourse. In this book, I analyze a large corpus of early Christian texts, alongside the pseudepigraphic materials, in order to understand how their authors—who had no intrinsic interest in slaves—used, abused, and silenced enslaved characters to articulate their own social, political, and theological visions. My aim is to explore the discursive use of slaves in these texts in order to consider an alternative historiography of earliest Christ-groups. The first task, then, is to examine “how slaves are good to think with.”

Thinking with slaves means probing their silences, their lived conditions as property (or “chattels”), their perspectives, and the precarious circumstances of their lives. This task is obviously extremely difficult and humbling since the ancient slaves left no texts or testimonies from which one could recover their perspectives and experiences. Yet, if one shifts their focus and excavates ancient history carefully and critically, they may be able to discern some aspects of the viewpoints of ancient slaves, understand some of their concerns, and use this knowledge about them to construct the past more accurately. By combing through layers of texts and reading against the grain, one can identify the slaves “beneath the surface” and observe “the underlying dynamics of power at work.”¹ Reading “against the grain” means reading in a way that most modern scholars do not, that is by paying close attention to specific slaves in a narrative. It means not only paying close attention to the presence, absence, voice and voicelessness of individual enslaved bodies through specific texts, but also analyzing how they function to satisfy particular rhetorical discourses. This way of approaching the texts differently or “against the grain” allows us to recalibrate or to reconstruct these narratives. Thus, this book seeks a way to make slaves visible by un-silencing them in some specific texts and in the interpretation of these texts.²

The unifying theme of this monograph is the silencing of slave voices. This project explores the silenced voices and experiences of slaves, focusing on specific slaves as textualized characters in the so-called pseudepigraphic

materials and in some early “Christian” writings. The inclusion of the Pseudepigrapha is necessary to avoid imposing a demarcation between “Christian” and “Jewish” texts that is historically untenable.³ The so-called Pseudepigrapha offer us valuable windows into the zeitgeist of early Judaism(s) in the Second Temple period. They also provide us with particular insights for understanding some of the ways in which the earliest Christ-groups proceeded in defining themselves. It can be extremely difficult—if not altogether impossible at times—to distinguish between compositions based on Jewish traditions and so-called “Christian” texts, which may have been redacted or edited, based on a Jewish text, to suit particular theological viewpoints and arguments.⁴ The parameters of early Judaism(s) and “Christian origins” are flexible, complex, and contested.⁵

1.1 Plan of the study

This book has eight chapters. Chapter 1 (this introduction) covers the theoretical ground by highlighting how subaltern studies and, *inter alia*, post-colonial studies (resistance to the practice of colonialism and to master narratives) can help us uncover buried archives with which one may question the silencing of subaltern voices.⁶ The goal of Chapter 2 (Slaves in the Pseudepigrapha) is to highlight the different social, political, and literary dynamics around the slaves as characters in the pseudepigraphic literature. The chapter has a serial narrative orientation. I highlight slaves in the works surveyed, and comment on what each text says about a discourse of slavery, the particular assumptions about slaveholding, and the practices of slave owners. I also suggest a few ways that the representation of enslaved persons in this collection may have shaped the representation of slaves among some of the earliest Christ-groups. In the Pseudepigrapha, slaves, as literary figures or characters, are used to advance different discourses on wisdom, as well as the discussions and understandings of how one should live and interact with others in society. The diverse experiences of enslaved literary figures are not questioned in these texts that purport to share with others the benefit of wisdom. The bodies of the slaves are mostly relegated to their useful functions—their bodies are disposable, constantly threatened, socially constructed and functioning as properties due to the lack of interest in their humanity. One may then problematize the very goal of these texts when considering the figure of the enslaved persons in them. One may also wonder why it is there is virtually no scholarship on the slaves in this particular type of literature.

Chapter 3 examines slaves in the Pauline corpus. This chapter takes up the topic of slavery by focusing on three instances where slaves—or former slaves and characters that could be included in the nomenclature of ancient slaves—are mentioned in the Pauline literature: 1) Chloe’s people (τῶν Χλόης) in 1 Corinthians 1:11; 2) the (freed) slave Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25–30; and 3) the slave Onesimus in Philemon. The analysis undertaken therein has

three objectives. First, it seeks to uncover the narratives within and behind these Pauline texts from the perspectives of the slaves. Secondly, it highlights the voices, echoes, and silencing of the slaves in these texts. Thirdly, it argues that Paul's rhetorical language in the passages serves to establish his own esteemed hierarchical position.

Chapter 4 (Slaves in the gospels), focuses on the female slave of the high priest, "a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off" (John 18:26; see also Mark 14:66, Matthew 26:69, and Luke 22:56). It also emphasizes the account regarding Malchus, the slave of the high priest who had been struck by one of Jesus' disciples (Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22: 50; and John 18:10). The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the process of highlighting marginalized and silenced slave characters in the texts may help in reconstructing and destabilizing certain conceptions and theological conclusions that were advanced by some of the earliest thinkers among Jesus' adherents.

Chapter 5 (Slaves in the book of Acts) considers and contrasts two specific slaves, one named (Rhoda, the maid slave in Acts 12:15), who is associated with a Christ-believing group, and the other nameless (the merchants' fortune-telling slave woman in Acts 16:16–18), who is not associated with Christ-believers. The purpose of highlighting these slaves is to show a pattern of violence (psychological and economic) exhibited in these texts, which takes the enslaved bodies to be vulnerable to such violence. The chapter explores the two narratives in which slave women speak only to be silenced by putting the narratives in conversation with each other. Considerations about the intersection of gender, hierarchy, social status, and economic functions, and how these various factors reinforce one another in the distribution of power within the depiction and silencing of slaves in the texts, are included in the chapter's analysis.⁷

The aim of Chapter 6, which focuses our attention on the slaves Felicitas and Blandina, is to argue that the slaves in the early Christian martyr narratives are used to advance particular theological conclusions; there is no interest in enslaved members of Christ-groups as violated bodies. In other words, the slaves serve as ideological and interpretative canvases that allow early Christian thinkers and theologians to paint and articulate their specific socio-rhetoric. The focus is on two particular female slave figures, namely Felicitas and Blandina. The emphasis is on them because the story of Felicitas, within the martyrdom account of Perpetua and Felicitas, and the story of Blandina in the account of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, are the only two early Christian narratives that feature female slaves as martyrs. The portrayal of Felicitas in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is analyzed first in order to explore how she has been re-signified, reinterpreted, and reimagined in the *Acta*. The chapter is concluded with an analysis of how Blandina is used and abused in the myth-making process of early Christian discourse.

Chapter 7 (Slaves in the *Acts of Andrew*) examines how the act of thinking with slaves may help one understand socio-rhetoric and silencing in that particular early Christian narrative. The focus will be on the female slave Euclia, whose body has been used and abused as a surrogate body by her Christian mistress. I argue that Euclia's mutilated slave body served as discursive material for the author to employ his various social and theological purposes. I will also explore how some curious narrational elements might help in considering the macro-political dimension of the text.

The last chapter of this study (Chapter 8) concludes with a few remarks about why we need to pay attention to figures of slaves in antiquity, what we may uncover from the study of slaves, and what we can learn in the present when we strive to animate silenced figures of the past.

Although the chapters in this book cover various terrain, my argument is clear and cohesive throughout. The theme of the silencing of slaves and slave voices in the Pseudepigrapha and various early Christian texts connects with the central argument to constitute a coherent research enterprise. Paying attention to silence, presence made absence, bodies taken for granted, bodies in motion, threatened bodies that exist to accomplish the desires of powerful figures, and to wounded and traumatized bodies in the texts, can be revealing to the ancient historian.

People in antiquity were on many occasions made slaves as the result of unfortunate circumstances. Slaves were at the margins of political power in the sense that they could not vote or hold office, their bodies were vulnerable to beatings and abuse, they were dishonoured as persons, and they lived under the absolute authority of their owners. However, one must be careful in castigating them as being simply dead at the margins of the social and political realms in antiquity.⁸ The slaves were present in their utility for the social orders to go unabated, but they were rendered absent or invisible in their subjectivity. That absence, nevertheless, "must always have been under threat: the human persona of the slave threatened the ordered and hierarchical universe constructed in the discourses of power."⁹ This book seeks to make enslaved persons visible; it attempts to hear them, realize the brokenness of their bodies, be surprised by them in how they convey—almost in spite of the literary control of the authors and beneath the rhetorical force of their discourses—wisdom, theological insights, varied forms of resistance, profound questions and challenges.

No one doing research in ancient slavery can refuse to acknowledge Keith Bradley and his work has been an inspiration to many. Bradley is a very important contributor in the study of ancient slavery, especially in how he draws readers' attention to *notice* references to slaves in texts of various genres. Casual allusions and incidental references to slaves are important markers to pay attention to if one wants to highlight slaves in the ancient texts. Bradley's strategies for illuminating the lives of slaves serve as my guidelines in the present project. J. Albert Harrill and Jennifer A. Glancy are

particularly formidable New Testament researchers who, in the last two decades, have advanced the topic of ancient slavery in relation to early Christian texts.¹⁰ The works of Harrill and Glancy on slavery in early Christian writings push forward the works of other New Testament scholars and add much-needed nuances to these scholars' interpretations and conclusions.¹¹ I have learned a great deal from reading their works, and from the work of others in this area.¹² My work differs from the previously mentioned studies in the following ways. First, it pays attention to slaves in a body of texts that have never been considered in the study of ancient slavery before, namely the pseudepigraphic materials. Second, in a sustained manner, it focuses on specific slaves.¹³ Paying close attention to slaves in these variegated texts is also a way to question our own reading and interpretative choices vis-à-vis slaves and the rise of earliest Christ-groups. Admittedly, the scope of this research project is vast. It goes beyond anything done previously and it will fill a significant void in the literature. The aim is to place these texts in larger, more critical conversations by looking at history "from below."¹⁴

1.2 Silencing in texts

Michel-Rolph Trouillot's seminal work, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, demonstrates that historical narratives can be used both for silencing the past and for rewriting it.¹⁵ He argues convincingly that scholars have participated in creating both presence and silence in the historical texts, figures, and events they choose to uncover, study, and emphasize.¹⁶ Trouillot showed how the extraordinary event that was the Haitian Revolution "entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened."¹⁷ He later elaborates on the question of writing a history of the impossible.¹⁸

In terms of research on slaves in antiquity, Trouillot's query is pertinent: How does one write a history of those who left no writing? What concerns me in this project is the challenge of approaching the earliest history of the Jesus movements from below. In other words, how does one understand some of the texts at the cross section of early Judaism(s) and "Christian origins" from the viewpoint of the slaves? An analysis of slaves in texts of antiquity needs to understand not only the cultural and socio-political milieu of these texts, but also the ideological structures resulting from the contexts and interpretations of these texts. Trouillot shows how the historical records can in fact muzzle the past, and how silence can play an important role in managing the interpretation of the historical methods.

Trouillot uses "four crucial moments" to enter into the process of historical production. These are the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*), the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*), the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*), and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).¹⁹ He utilizes these

conceptual tools to help the researcher understand the mechanisms behind the production of history, and thus, push for more complexity and nuance in our understanding of history.

Revising history in this manner means continually questioning and reviewing these crucial moments in order to surpass any unsophisticated understanding of the past. The past is not self-evident, it is multifaceted; it is always given through certain lenses that highlight and silence certain perspectives. In other words, the past is perspectival and it is always dynamic in its interpretation. The historian reports some historical facts while also interpreting them.²⁰ Acknowledging that all history writing is selective and perspectival, the interests and assumptions of histories must therefore be studied and criticized. The “great men” of history must be de-centered so that one may analyze the multiplicity and various possibilities of history. The researcher is necessarily engaged in a type of reflexive mode by moving between theory and evidence, by reflecting on his or her social positioning(s) in doing certain work, and in exploring critically and reflexively what one’s assumptions are in asking (and not asking) certain scholarly questions.²¹

Trouillot argues that “any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly.”²² The silences are not a matter of actual non-existence of particular historical figures or phenomena, rather, they are the choice of authors and historians to make certain figures or phenomena invisible; that is, deemed not important to highlight, see, comprehend, and study because they are simply beside the point of historical enquiry. Trouillot states,

The presences and absences embodied in sources are ... neither neutral or natural. They are created. As such, they are not mere presences and absences, but mentions or silences of various kinds and degrees. By silence, I mean an active and transitive process: one “silences” a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun. One engages in the practice of silencing. Mentions and silences are thus active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis.²³

Silence in this sense is not made manifest as mere absence of facts, or the absence of specific groups of people’s participation in the mechanism of historical production. Rather, silence is manufactured through the erasure of certain pasts, peoples and knowledge. The politics of historical representation is achieved by means of the source production, archives, and narratives. The past is therefore occluded by and through these silences. Trouillot contends that the general silencing of the Haitian Revolution by Western historiography and by cultural producers of the early nineteenth century is not based on the unimportance of the Revolution. After all, this grand act remains the most successful slave revolution in history, and the first abolition of slavery in

an important slave society. However, this particular enterprise was considered unthinkable in the overarching cultural, racial, and imperial landscape of the early nineteenth century. It did not happen because it was impossible in the framework of Western thought.²⁴

Trouillot goes on to say, “The Haitian Revolution did challenge the ontological and political assumption of the most radical writers of the Enlightenment.”²⁵ The unthinkable actions of the slaves who fought and won against Napoleon’s army were not and could not be acknowledged as historical fact. The fact that some slaves in the eighteenth-century Caribbean would have thought about revolting against dehumanizing injustice, taken seriously the ideals of the Enlightenment and of revolutionary “Jacobinism” (*Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité*), and made the most of European classical education and thoughts applicable for liberation was considered impossible. Trouillot criticizes the fact that “many historians are more willing to accept the idea that slaves could have been influenced by whites or mulattoes, with whom we know they had limited contacts, than they are willing to accept the idea that slaves could have convinced other slaves that they had the right to revolt.”²⁶ To emphasize the point further, it is not that particular events, individuals, or social groups in history are unimportant; it is rather that the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*) captures what it wants and excludes whatever it deems irrelevant, regardless of the significance of specific historical events or peoples.²⁷

Considering Trouillot’s four crucial moments in the process of historical production may enable us to realize the silences not only in the texts, but also in our own scholarly enterprise. The moment of “fact creation” happens when we decide what counts as worthy historical enquiry and what does not. For example, in the study of slaves in antiquity, or in the precise interest guiding my study, the presence of slaves in the pseudepigraphic materials and in some early Christian writings is everywhere, but it is only in the last few decades that a scholarly interest has endeavoured to highlight and understand slaves in the so-called New Testament and the broader early Christian literature. The slaves, however, are still invisible in the Pseudepigrapha. A strategy of silencing the slaves in these texts, and *inter alia*, my treatment of them in this study may be to continue to ignore them and to question the significance or validity of studying slaves as characters in the Pseudepigrapha in relationship to the study of early Christ-groups. It may not matter to some readers that the division of Jewish and Christian texts is historically problematic, or that some of these texts may be considered as creating a reflexive and ideological platform for some early Christ-followers for articulating their own discourses on slaves in certain early Christian texts. For example, the discussions around whether Joseph was a slave or not in the *Testament of Joseph* may well be reflecting discussions among Christ-group members in the early second century C.E. who adopted and adapted this text, as they were trying to define themselves socially, politically, and theologically in the larger Greek and

Roman world. Thus, it remains important to probe some plausible connections between the plight of the enslaved persons in these texts in order to notice certain articulation of self-definition in relation to particular social, political ideologies, and theologies.

It is important to question the silences of history as well as the choices one makes to silence or to ignore silences in texts and scholarly contexts. In this book, I take the risk of attempting to understand the slaves in these bewildering texts because I want to break historical barriers and provoke others to probe the connections between silence and the making of sources. In Trouillot's second moment (the making of archives), the concern is about the matters of selection (producers, evidence, themes, procedures) and exclusion (some producers, some evidence, some themes, and some procedures). The making of archives necessarily implies choices. However, the making of archives is also simultaneously participating in the practice of silencing. Some texts are studied and some narratives or figures are given more prominence, while others stay in obscurity.

In the case of early Christian studies, the focus on unifying beliefs, an essentialized and unified entity, and clear demarcations between "orthodoxy" and "heresy," or between the meta narrative of "canonical" texts versus "non-canonical" texts, has had the pervasive consequences of obscuring extremely complex areas of analysis, and has kept a number of scholars preoccupied for many years in defending particular ideological camps. It is true, more and more scholars studying the social and cultural landscape of the ancient Mediterranean world admit that these labels are not helpful for historical enquiry and that the tradition is much more conflicted,²⁸ but more work is needed to analyze the ordinariness of social agents and restore texture and tension in the making of historical archives and the historical existence of slaves in antiquity. In other words, it is imperative to study a past that is both multidirectional and mundane.²⁹ The archives need to be broadened. It is important to open the archives and to consider the ideological power that contributed and continues to naturalize the absence of slaves within them.

There are numerous questions, at a methodological, philosophical and even stemming from an ethical dimension, that are necessarily raised when one is presently engaged in reading these texts. Do we, in essence, adhere to a positivist stance, which states that we simply observe and describe what we see without making moral judgments, or is it at all possible to take sides in our analysis? Do we pretend to simply be dispassionate interpreters of the world of antiquity? In this book, I am not pretending to do my research from a completely neutral perspective. I agree with Richard Alston who insists that in a positivist approach "we run the risk of ignoring the voice that cannot be heard. Our researches become subject to the tyranny of the archive, in which what is recorded is assumed to be all that is there. In the case of slavery, to merely record the absence is to collude in the Classical discourse and the technologies of domination that supported slavery."³⁰

I am interested in slaves, in the messiness of history, and in the intersectionality of gender, class differences, conflicts, concerns, contested socio-political experiences, social divisions, race and ethnicity. Clearly, the enslaved persons are textualized; that is, the entanglements of texts as rhetorically motivated and slaves (real, constructed, and imagined in texts as social objects) are what one has to deal with. Social realities and the social world of the texts are enmeshed with rhetorical purposes and literary constructions. There is a gap between reality and image. Placing slaves and their struggles at the forefront of our analysis means understanding the texts as arguments, whether originally and consciously composed as such: we ask what a particular text means, what its rhetorical intentions are, what rhetorical issues it seeks to address and overcome, whose interests it articulates, which social and political position it re-inscribes, and to what purpose. Methodologically, this is important. It allows one to read the texts much more carefully and critically without merely being apologists of certain theological, philosophical, and ideological positions.

The analysis undertaken in many instances in this monograph cannot determine whether a particular slave existed or not, or whether enslaved persons really were treated exactly as projected or constructed in certain texts. What one can do, however, is to consider critically what certain rhetorical moves aimed to accomplish within a text in regard to its intended audience(s). In other words, one needs to consider the dynamic interchange between the sociocultural contexts, the author, the text in its rhetorical force, the audience to which the text is addressed, and the argumentative aims of the text. In this line of thought, Richard Alston states, "We can be quite sure that what was being depicted did not 'represent' slaves. The slaves in reality, the bearers of images, were not within the images themselves, which differed radically from the norms of servile corporeality. In this crisis of representation, there is a 're-presentation' of the slave in a different form, but in that 're-presentation' there is an absence that must have been striking."³¹ The bewildering range of ancient documents associated with the multiplicity of early Christ-groups must be the focus of more research.³² Therefore, slaves in early Christian contexts need to be part of serious historical enquiry.³³

Trouillot's third moment of fact retrieval or the making of *narratives* is pregnant with significance. Clearly, the narratives do not have any interests in the slaves. That is not an altogether surprising element of historical analysis when one places them in their broader political, social, and cultural contexts. What is mostly important to notice is the omission and silencing of slaves and how their erasure in the narratives points to larger issues worth studying. I illustrate this point in the chapter on slaves in the gospels (Chapter 4). I consider in that chapter how the female slave who questioned Peter at Jesus' arrest has been treated in the various gospel narratives. I propose to read the various manifestations of the slaves in the high priest's courtyard who accuse Peter of being with Jesus as the development of one character, the female

slave. As we move from one gospel to the next (starting from Mark to John), the gospel writers alter the identity of that particular slave in order to protect Peter's image and memory. Ultimately, the narratives are created to silence the voice of one female slave in order to rehabilitate the voice, the memory, and the legacy of a male disciple.

Trouillot's last moment of historical production is that of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance). The myth-making and meaning-making process that articulates certain originary pasts devoid of conflicts and messiness is what the early Christian thinkers try to present. The task of the historian of the ancient world is to expose the rifts, the cracks, and the disorder. The process of doing so implies that one is engaged in thinking and reading differently. It means questioning what is considered significant and why; it means interrogating the power and the production of history. In the subsequent chapters, I engage with buried and silenced voices. I try to pay serious attention to slaves as characters, who are usually relegated to the margins of the historical archives in early Judaism(s) and early Christianities. Postcolonial and subaltern studies provide a way of exposing the rifts and cracks in traditional historical narratives, of giving voice to the silenced, and by doing so, provide a much more nuanced, and complete understanding of history.

1.3 Subaltern historiography

This book is about slaves in texts and contexts of the earliest Christ-groups. The methodological underpinning of this project is that of Subaltern studies. Subaltern studies has a proclivity for difference; it seeks to disrupt and challenge the binary of margins and center. The periphery is not understood as a site of absence. Subalternity is linked to the notion of marginality in its plural and complex forms. The margins can also be a space for critical reflection, articulation, and clarification. It does not imply a perennial longing to displace those at the center and take their place; that would mean to re-inscribe a center of power with its corollaries of exploitation, brutality, and destruction. Rather, the poles of "margin" and "center" are complex, flexible, and always negotiated in the multiplicity of contexts of analysis.³⁴

The "center" has the power to establish what it views as normative, determining what counts as valuable or worthy of consideration, and what it considers insignificant (certain narratives, discourses, histories, and particular social and ethnic groups). The subaltern subject is designated "Other" and placed in a subordinate position in relation to the determining authority of "the center." Antonio Gramsci popularized the term "subaltern" in the 1920s and 1930s in his writings on theories of class struggles.³⁵ The term has been adopted and frequently used in India by several Marxist intellectuals who published a number of critical studies related to class, caste, age, and gender between 1982 and 1996. Ranajit Guha, the editor of the first volume and the

driving intellectual force behind the *Subaltern Studies* group, presents the term and the spectrum of the project: "The word 'subaltern' ... stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, 'of inferior rank.' It will be used ... as a name for the general attitude of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way."³⁶ Of course, one should not think that the original project of the Subaltern Studies group in India has not been altered, redefined, and reinvented by scholars working from other communities, cultural and intellectual contexts, and by interpreters and interlocutors appending their own critical thoughts around social histories external to the original group. The founders of the *Subaltern Studies* group developed their ideas at a critical time of history, while being influenced by a wealth of knowledge and research on history from below pertaining to peasant insurgency in colonial India.³⁷ Subaltern studies then became intertwined with efforts to reimagine India's history in the 1980s and 1990s by rejecting official nationalism because of its alliance with colonial ideologies and practices. This was necessary for critical voices and thinkers to cultivate transnational consciousness, conversations, and alliances. Current critical analyses inspired by Subaltern studies examines the variegated and fragmented experiences of power, domination, oppression, violence, displacement, and marginalization of many in the post-modern and post-colonial world, alongside the vectors of gender, class, race and ethnicity.³⁸ Subaltern studies scholars engage in close critical readings of colonial texts and master narratives. They probe oral histories and use local ethnographic techniques to de-center grand master narratives and overarching subjects to reveal distinct (local) histories and cultures of subaltern groups. In this sense,

Subaltern Studies has become a post-colonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. (...) Subaltern Studies' growing diversity of research now coheres like the new cultural history. Its search for hidden pasts evokes textual criticism, fragmentary testimonies, and lost moments, to restore the integrity of indigenous histories that appear naturally in non-linear, oral, symbolic, vernacular, and dramatic forms.³⁹

The practice of subaltern history, as suggested by Dipesh Chakrabarty, "would aim to take history, the code, to its limits in order to make its unworking visible."⁴⁰ Thus, the project I am undertaking is to study some fragmentary testimonies seriously, to note and search for the presence of the slaves, and to probe silences and lost moments in the slaves' pasts that are encrypted in some specific texts, in order to add nuance to the social histories of earliest Christ-groups.

I am not interested in the grand narratives or the grand players of history. The task for a (postcolonial) historian of antiquity interested in the voice and

thought of the “subaltern” is to search for the buried presences, fears, as well as the historical alternatives, and allow the sighs and sufferings of the non-elite to disturb the presented and sanctioned archives, to create a more nuanced understanding of the past. This is in no way a claim to offer a definitive interpretation of a particular narrative, or to “own” a text. The particular interest in the voice and thought of the “Other” does not mean trying to represent or speak for the subaltern either.⁴¹ No one can speak for the slaves in antiquity.⁴² This particular focus means reading differently by looking at the texts “from below” with the aim to uncover other potential significance. This kind of reading is a way to push the reader to question the moment of fact creation, or the making of sources, for particular ideological and theological purposes. In this sense, the practice of subaltern critical historiography, with its potentials to unearth subaltern pasts, allows not only the disciplines of history, but also of Religious Studies, Biblical Studies, or Classics, “to be what it is and yet at the same time help to show what its limits are.”⁴³

My task is to uncover small tales constructed around slaves, or better, to consider how particular narratives could be understood differently if the reader pays attention to enslaved persons in their characterizations in the texts.

Slaves are, for the most part, silent or silenced in the narratives. One may wish there were more precise ways to get at their voices, desires, activities, and personal thoughts in the texts we investigate. The alternative reading of probing silence and of trying to understand unspoken utterances is not an easy task. Reading against the grain requires alertness to the gaps in the texts. Making silence speak requires much patience and attentiveness to minute details by proceeding tentatively and noticing passing or dismissive comments. It also requires a commitment on the part of the historian to actually *see* the presence of marginalized and enslaved peoples that are rendered invisible, and hear their voices that are made mute in the texts, around the texts, and outside of the texts.⁴⁴ The task, then, is to consider alternative historical routes, brief paths, obscure terrains, and muddy detours, which can lead to fruitful explanations, fresh and creative possibilities, and a way forward in historical and narrational analysis, leading to new understanding of specific social realities.

Historians must analyze the presence of particular causes, many times indirectly, in order to arrive at a satisfactory or plausible explanation for a particular historical fact. In the case of the present research on slaves in texts and overall contexts of the earliest Christ-groups, the historian needs to review the data carefully. As historian, *qua* historian, one cannot invoke or ascribe any historical values to God, the gods, or the supernatural in the interpretation, analysis, and description of historical events, issues, phenomena, or social realities and social artifacts. This, however, does not imply that God/the gods/the supernatural do not play a role in the belief system(s) of the historical agents, actors, literary figures and subjects under study.⁴⁵ God/the gods/the supernatural realm are thus presented as features resulting from ideological, theological, mythological claims and human imagination engaged

in varied social circumstances, which the historian must attempt to understand, explain and deconstruct. While the ancients may have been talking about otherworldly activities, they impressed their ideas on the social realities of this world.⁴⁶ Likewise, while the ancient (male) elites may have been philosophizing about the virtues of wisdom, they did so within particular political, cultural, and social contexts that allowed them to enjoy the leisure of metaphysical discussions and speculations. Slaves existed in a liminal category of human/thing/object that allowed particular free citizens of antiquity to live a life of material and intellectual pleasures.⁴⁷ What one can do is to try to maneuver through the discourse, historical evidence, silences, gaps, and belief system(s) of those in the past, in order to probe how they make the articulation of certain historical conclusions and happenings possible.⁴⁸ What I mean is this: the earliest Christ-groups would have presented a different historical outlook if slaves were treated not simply as mere bodies to be exploited for theological, political, and social purposes, but were instead acknowledged and treated as full members of the variegated Christ-communities.

The contributions of many academic discourses can be divided into two categories: correctives and concepts. Under the category of correctives are disquisitions that seek to show that something has been ignored in a given field. For example, a feminist corrective would demonstrate that women have been ignored in a given context, and the postcolonialist corrective would argue for placing colonial and neo-colonial projects at the center of a given debate and criticism. In the second category, the conceptual contributions, the true mark of a good conceptual contribution is that it manages to transcend the original context of debate and can be exported elsewhere. Subaltern studies would be an example of a conceptual contribution, which has transcended the original context of postcolonial India. The two—correctives and concepts—are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but overall it is much easier to dismiss correctives than to ignore strong conceptual contributions. What is more important is what the reading of certain texts through particular prisms does to enrich the experience of reading such texts, or their potential for fruitfulness. The conceptual contribution of this book is evident in how it shows the nuance in interpretation a reader gains in (re)reading some texts with a particular concern to *notice* slaves as characters in them. In other words, what I am arguing for in the present monograph is this: the reading of the pseudepigraphic materials and some early Christian writings is enhanced by paying close attention to slaves as characters in them. The focus is not on discourse about slavery in antiquity, as a general and interesting topic of research—which, recognizably, is an important line of historical enquiry. The emphasis, rather, is on slaves as characters in the texts and how that affects the authors' creation of meaning. The vexing questions are as follows: How is it possible to write histories about slaves who have not left any sources of their own? What can we know about those lost to history? The task of the historian is much more than that of retrieving data. The historian also is a crafter of

narratives. How, then, can one “devise strategies of multivocal histories in which we hear subaltern voices”?⁴⁹ Research strategies and imaginative/creative historical possibilities are ways the historian may navigate and propose different ways of conceptualizing the past. History is as much construction as it is interpretation. The “subaltern past” is possible to imagine and to re-create, in some ways, if the historian is curious enough to pay close attention to the silenced narratives and figures of the past. An explicit aim of subaltern studies is “to make the subaltern the sovereign subject of history, to listen to their voices, to take their experiences and thought (and not just their material circumstances) seriously.”⁵⁰ In the case of considering ancient enslaved peoples seriously, it is not about psychologizing them; rather, it is about highlighting their few words, and their imposed silences. It is about considering seriously how they have been ostracized, brutalized, and traumatized. Paying attention to “words and things that construct history”⁵¹ is important if one wants to develop ways of reading and understanding history “from below.” As Page duBois states, “The distorted, beaten, whipped, tortured, tattooed, often comic body of the slave insists on its presence, and disturbs the tranquility of positivist historicism, of a serene and confident scholarly posture toward antiquity. The slave cannot be seen; the slave must be seen.”⁵² In this sense, the scholar cannot simply look at the data and dispassionately resign themselves to enjoy the texts without considering the discursive mechanisms by which slaves were made to be invisible in the accounts. *The slave must be seen!* In insisting that the slave must be seen and heard, the historian reflects on texts and their contexts, while upsetting some interpretations and conclusions of those who specialize in these texts and continue to impose silence as a mechanism of power. The texts do not come to us unmediated. The interpretation of texts is not value-neutral. Page duBois is acerbic in her analysis, and she is worth quoting at length:

Scholarship on slavery, with its own rhetoric, implicated in the politics of its own day, can obscure this never-ending process, inevitable in any society marked by dramatic differences in the status of human beings. Scholarship can ignore slavery entirely. Or it can describe it as a static object in the past, relying on ancient texts, inscriptions, acts, and utterances as evidence of reality without considering the ways in which every utterance or representation is an act, a taking of a position in an ongoing struggle to maintain authority and mastery on the part of ancient slaveholders.⁵³

The perspective of the past that is of interest to me in this project is that of a social historian. As a cultural studies critic, the social historian can critically analyze and try to make sense of the “religious/supernatural” data (i.e., the theological language of the texts and artifacts under study) and formulate plausible historical explanations through the mundane, human sides of the

narratives, without resorting to any ahistorical explanatory mechanisms. In this sense, I endeavour to highlight and understand slaves in texts and their contexts (historical, theological, and narrativ) for the sake of proposing an alternative form of historical perspective, which is that of a different or alternative historiography. This is in line with the methodological standpoint of subaltern critical engagement: "Subaltern studies can be viewed as a form of postcolonial historiography which interrogates the centre from the margin using deconstructive and poststructuralist practices. It focuses attention on the function of the centre as a site of the operation of power and thus confers insight on the marginalized or subaltern by exposing the oppressive nature of this discourse."⁵⁴ In other words, subaltern historians are sensitive to the nuance of power. They consequently develop ways to recognize the voice, silences, sighs and insights of the marginalized subjects of history.

What Subaltern studies offer me is a way to place the subaltern subject (the enslaved figure) at the center of my analysis. In other words, the interpretative bias that guides my analysis is that of highlighting the periphery over the center. Thus, the slave is not viewed as or relegated to a muted absence outside the system of normality in relation to an invariable presence constructed as a master narrative. Instead, the slave is highlighted as an important factor in offering new possibilities for reading and (re)interpreting antiquity.⁵⁵ My contention is that it matters to pay attention to silence and the processes of silencing of slaves in texts and contexts relative to the rise of the earliest Christ-groups. A critical social history that pursues historical questions differently demands that. In this sense, I follow Keith Bradley in his gesture of solidarity with the silenced slaves of antiquity: "We will never know exactly, to be sure, what they thought, or felt; but to try to find out is, I believe, something that matters."⁵⁶ My intention in critically examining slaves in these various texts is to re-evaluate, reimagine, and deconstruct certain normative ways of reading and interpreting the past in order to recover multiple meanings, and perceive anew the place, the presence made absence, and the voice—persistent, feeble, and muted—of the slaves. I revisit some familiar terrains, and some less familiar sources. Although I have used a variety of secondary sources to inform my analysis and interpretations, I consider this whole project as an exercise in re-reading and re-engaging the primary texts. I should emphasize that this book is not a thorough treatment of all slaves in the Pseudepigrapha and in the early Christian writings. Although I have discussed a fair number of them in this book, I realize the task of being exhaustive is near impossible. In fact, comprehensiveness is not the goal of this study, as I do not want my project to be lost in some kind of unreadable catalog.

I am not interested in major figures or the "great men," as discursively constructed in the narratives. This is the great irony of history: that marginal social and religious movement(s) that emerged mostly from those occupying low levels of the economic and social strata of the Mediterranean world in the first century (e.g., peasants, poor urbanites, culturally displaced migrants,

freedpersons, slaves, and various subordinated peoples), would gradually become the creative platforms on which some intellectuals and theologians developed their socio-rhetorics and social ideologies. This development happened many times to the detriment of the various groups that were engaged in reflexive social experiments.

My interests are in the slaves, many of them women, most of them nameless. They may provide us with an alternative historiography or a new understanding of some early Jewish and some early Christian texts. Paying serious attention to the slaves in these texts may help us find a way to question, and even destabilize some of the ways major characters in these texts (such as Joseph, Job, Jesus, Paul, or Peter) have been textually negotiated and mediated, rhetorically constructed, theologically interested, elevated, habilitated/rehabilitated, and remembered for particular purposes of social constructions and cultural maintenance. In this project, I am involved not only in counter reading and reading between the lines, but also in counter history. My historical interest is not in essentializing the multiple identities of a group, because the slaves in antiquity were far from uniform, especially considering the fact that this group included both the abject poor and the relatively rich and influential slave manager. Rather, the aim of this research is to focus specifically on a number of enslaved persons in a number of texts in order to actualize them and make them the subject of historical enquiry and analysis.

1.4 Summary and conclusion

- 1 This book pays close attention to slaves in the so-called Pseudepigrapha and in some early Christian texts.
- 2 This monograph does not consider any bifurcation between canonical texts and non-canonical texts, or between Jewish and Christian texts. This distinction is historically misplaced. Various texts pertaining to early Judaism and early Christianities are used and are of interest.
- 3 The main argument of this book is that the authors of the texts studied use slaves as a way to advance their own socio-rhetoric and establish their own hierarchical positions.
- 4 This book is about description as well as evaluation. Slaves are described in their slave- like conditions, but the social, ideological, and rhetorical constructions of the slaves in the texts are also evaluated in order to show the arguments of the texts.
- 5 There is a specific focus on characterization in this book. Slaves are studied as characters (usually minor and not so well-known characters) that help move the narratives forward.
- 6 A major method that guides this study is that of “thinking with slaves” and of attempting to understand the history of some early Christ-groups differently.

- 7 Paying attention to the enslaved persons in antiquity implies probing the ideological contexts that manufacture them as silenced voices and as absence, although they were ubiquitously present.
- 8 Paying attention to slaves means highlighting their presence, voices, echoes, and the mechanisms of their silencing in the texts.
- 9 Paying attention to slaves as characters in the narratives means reading the texts differently, and against the grain.
- 10 Major methodological difficulties make it difficult for the historian of antiquity to really see the slaves in the texts. This is why the use of Subaltern studies is important in order to probe history from below.
- 11 Trouillot's "four crucial moments" to analyze the process of historical production allow us to realize and understand the silences, both in sources/texts and in our own scholarship. Silence is also about making invisible (veiling, hiding). This book may be a way to help, or to challenge us to question how we have not been paying more attention to silences in our own scholarship.
- 12 The method of this book is to examine the texts by allowing slaves as textualized characters to help us in our analysis and investigations. This means reading the texts with the clear intention of focusing on enslaved persons, not only as they are depicted within particular ideological discourses, but also on how they may let us reimagine these texts.
- 13 The interest is in slaves and not in the usual or common major historical and literary/ideological figures of the past.
- 14 This study is about refiguring, redescribing, and reconstructing.
- 15 The ideological aim of this book is to destabilize the meta-narrative of early Christian historiography. This study seeks to reimagine early Christian history by taking slaves in this history production seriously.

As I have stated, my research is not without its biases. I am not pretending to be engaging in a scholarship that is dispassionate and indifferent to the subject of slavery, presented in a detached neutral manner. This statement does not imply a lack of intellectual responsibility, integrity, academic rigor, critical distance, and honesty in my scholarship, however. It means that I strive to advance knowledge not as a positivist historian with pretension to impartiality and utmost objectivity, but as one situated in specific social and political positions and sympathizing with particular characters in my historical inquiry. I side with the enslaved peoples of antiquity and of today.⁵⁷

The challenge of this book is to realize how slaves as characters in the pseudepigraphic literature and in some early Christian texts have been used and abused to fit certain ideological and social modes. That is, how they have been silenced and how they have been made invisible through instruments of power that often assumed the naturalness of a representation of humans as chattels. Therefore, the ultimate challenge is to expose the roots of this ideology that permeated the texts under study and to consider alternative ways of understanding history.

Notes

- 1 See Martin Hall, "Ambiguity and contradiction in the archaeology of slavery," in *Archaeological Dialogues* 15.2 (2008): 128–130, here 129. Here is the full quote: "We can use material culture, texts and other kinds of evidence to look for recurrent patterns across contexts that help us see the underlying dynamics of power at work (...) The point of comparison is rather to reach beneath the immediate and specific to look for the interests at play beneath the surface—the dynamics of labour relations, gender, the extraction of surplus benefit, status and claims to benefits."
- 2 Peter Hunt showed in his study of Greek slavery that an absence of the slave presence in historical sources can be revealing, and Roberta Stewart has done something similar for Roman slavery with her study of Plautus' comedies. See P. Hunt, *Slaves, Warfare, and Ideology in the Greek Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); R. Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery* (Malden, MA; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). See also Richard Alston, Edith Hall, Laura Proffitt, eds., *Reading Ancient Slavery* (London/New York: Bristol Classical Press, 2011). The essays in this fascinating volume try to uncover slave voices and agency from ancient literature and art. These authors attempt to explore how Greek and Roman texts may in fact help the attentive historian to listen and to probe the "voice" of the slave, in spite of the strategies of the ancient authors to occult the experience of the enslaved persons and to naturalize slavery in the texts. One may also refer to the work of Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). These authors seek to make slaves visible by working through the dominant discourse of Roman slave owners. Their strategies for doing this detective endeavour is developed as follows. First, by acknowledging that "although Roman slaveholders often criticized the behavior of their slaves, they still provide testimony to the actions themselves, even where the slave's cause or end is difficult to see." Second, by always questioning the master's rationale of the slave's behaviour: "Roman slaveholders judged their slaves' actions in terms of their own interests, and hence the naming of those actions stakes claims about the slave's motives and character that cannot dispassionately denote the action." Third, by paying attention to silences: "We must listen for silences and look for what seem to be moments of slave owners' blindness: not only do they misname or misjudge, they simply cannot see what happens for and to the slave." *Ibid.*, 7, 8.
- 3 The proposed research is an important one for scholars working in the cross section of early Judaism(s) and "Christian" origins, since these texts (the pseudepigraphic materials and the early Christian writings) share a common background for different ethical understandings.
- 4 I am simply paraphrasing James H. Charlesworth when he states, "it is historically impossible, and often theologically illegitimate to distinguish sharply between Jewish compositions and Christian documents." See Charlesworth, "The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha—Thirty Years Later," in *New Vistas on Early Judaism and Christianity: From Enoch to Montréal and Back* (eds., Lorenzo DiTommaso and Gerben S. Oegema; London/Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2016), 7.
- 5 I put these in scare quotes because I am uncomfortable with both terms, in spite of the fact they are retained in the title of this monograph. The term "Christian"—which I use thereafter without the quotation marks—is, for the earliest moments of the Jesus movement(s), historically problematic. The nomenclature "origins" is linked to the dynamic process of socio-rhetorics and social formation/myth-making of heterogeneous groups, which did not necessarily relate to one another or even to a particular historical figure. See A. J. Droge, "Cynics or Luddites? Excavating Q

Studies,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 37.2 (2008): 249–269. In addition, combining these two terms seems to imply that historical development of what became known in a later period as Christianity can unproblematically refer back to a complex gestation period that would have given rise to the birth of that particular religious tradition. I am indebted in my thoughts to William E. Arnal in his insightful remarks worth quoting at length: “While both Mack and I are equally interested in offering a sketch or even explanation for developments in ancient Christian history, in my opinion, the linear and idealist character of the scenarios offered by Mack so far only serve to perpetuate, almost inevitably, the same old Lukan ‘story’ of the ‘rise of Christianity.’ Individual episodes may be reconfigured; characters and events may be evaluated slightly differently. But our ‘redescription,’ if we are not careful, may in the end become just that: a redescription of the essentially straight line of development—from Jesus the teacher (schools) to the Jerusalem apostles (the pillars) to the Hellenist and Gentile-positive Antioch-based mission (pre-Pauline Christ cults) to Paul and thence to the ends of the earth—initially described by Luke and redescribed ever since.” See Arnal, “Why Q Failed: From Ideological Project to Group Formation,” in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (eds., Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004), 86.

- 6 I work from the perspective that “Postcolonialism, with its fundamental sympathies for the subaltern, for the peasantry, for the poor, for outcasts of all kinds, eschews the high culture of the elite and espouses subaltern cultures and knowledge which have historically been considered to be of little value but which it regards as rich repositories of culture and counter-knowledge.” See Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 114. Disability Studies, which is a fast-growing subfield of Biblical Studies, is within the broader umbrella of studying the marginalized and the subaltern. See for example Hector Avalos et al., eds., *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007). However, I have not made use of Disability Studies in my analysis because of my lack of knowledge in this particular area of analysis.
- 7 On intersectionality as a valuable analytical method see Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New York Press, 1995); Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.3 (2005): 1771–1800.
- 8 In his celebrated study, Orlando Patterson states, “Although the slave might be socially dead, he remained nonetheless an element of society. So the problem arose: how was he to be incorporated? Religion explains how it is possible to relate to the dead who still live. It says little about how ordinary people should be related to the living who are dead.” See Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (London/Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 45. Although I agree with Patterson in part, it is difficult, at least to me, to envisage the slaves as socially dead. In antiquity, many slaves were far from being socially dead, and many non-slaves were so poor and living in abject conditions, with no social connections, that they could be considered as socially dead. Thus, social death is no preserve of the slaves. Sara Forsdyke, for example, argues that although slaves were excluded from the formal political sphere in ancient Greece, they participated in the process through various relations and by their participation in forms of popular culture. See S. Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales and other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012). A recent book that engages with Patterson’s classic is *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death* (eds., Walter Scheidel and J. Bodel; Malden, MA, Oxford and Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).

- 9 See R. Alston, "Introduction: Rereading Ancient Slavery," in *Reading Ancient Slavery*, 16.
- 10 See among many of Albert Harrill's works on the topic, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 32 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995). Reprinted in Paperback Edition, 1998; aedem, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); "Slavery and Inhumanity: Keith Bradley's Legacy on Slavery in New Testament Studies," *Biblical Interpretation* 21 (2013): 506–514. Jennifer A. Glancy has a number of works on slaves in antiquity as well and in particular on slave bodies. See among her many scholarly outputs on the topic, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); "Slavery and the Rise of Christianity," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 1, *The Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds., Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 456–81.
- 11 See for example S. Scott Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7:21* (SBL Dissertation Series 11; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1973); Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
- 12 It is important to mention the recent and formidable contributions of Chris L. De Wet, on the subject of ancient slavery in relation to early Christianity. See, for example, De Wet, *Preaching Bondage: John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), and De Wet, *The Unbound God: Slavery and the formation of Early Christian Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018). See also Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Katherine A. Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (Atlanta, GA: Oxford University Press USA, 2018). In this monograph, Shaner manages to weave various disciplines together (archaeology, feminist studies, and ancient history) to study the complexities of power structures and struggles in earliest Christ-groups. The central argument of the monograph is clear, namely that we need to look for complexities and nuances when we refer to enslaved bodies in the ancient world, especially in relationship to earliest Christ-groups. Enslaved persons held positions of authority as priests, and as religious specialists. The present monograph differs from the aforementioned excellent studies by focusing on the particularities of single slaves in a variety of texts, and by trying to uncover/re(read) the narratives within and behind these texts from the perspectives of the enslaved persons. The kind of detailed attention the present work provides will fill a gap in the scholarly enterprise with regard to the representation of enslaved persons in the texts and contexts of early Christ-groups. See also Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement in Early Christian Discourse* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), and Michael Flexsenhar III's forthcoming monograph, *Christian in Caesar's Household: The Emperors' Slaves in the Makings of Christianity* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2018). I became aware of these books at a late stage in the publication process to include their findings or to engage with some of their arguments.
- 13 One may find references here and there to particular slaves or even a chapter on a particular slave, but there is no monograph devoted solely to slaves as characters in early Christian studies, let alone in the Pseudepigrapha.
- 14 The methodological aspect of exploring history "from below" has been undertaken in Biblical Studies. See *Christian Origins*. Vol. 1 of *A People's History of Christianity*

- (ed., Richard A. Horsley; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); Denis R. Janz, *A People's History of Christianity*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2005–2008); Diana B. Bass, *A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); *The People beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below* (ed. Joseph A. Marchal; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015). From a methodological standpoint, Richard Ascough provides words of wisdom and caution: “We need to face the fact that much of what we do in constructing a history from below will necessarily be speculative ... all of our conclusions must remain tentative ... we must remain humble in drawing our conclusions. This does not mean, however, that we simply default to older paradigms that privilege the writings of the minority elite, for conclusions drawn from this material should be equally humble and tentative (although often is not presented as such).” See Ascough, “Response: Broadening the Socioeconomic and Religious Context at Philippi,” in *The People beside Paul*, 106.
- 15 I will first explore Trouillot’s study about the process of silencing some pasts in historical enquiry, and then I will show how his approach is valuable to my own research endeavour.
 - 16 For Trouillot, “History is the fruit of power, but power itself is never so transparent that its analysis becomes superfluous. The ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.” Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995), Preface, xxiii. Trouillot’s book is an invitation to examine critically the varieties of silences in the historical records with the view to expose and challenge the silences of history. I thank my good friend Claudy Delné for suggesting this book to me. Trouillot’s work follows and expands on the critical work of the *Subaltern Studies* group (see below for more on the Subaltern Studies research project). His contributions show how he has always been interested to study groups that are usually ignored or at the margins of scholarly enquiry. See for example his *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), and *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
 - 17 *Silencing the Past* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995), 23.
 - 18 Ibid.
 - 19 Ibid., 26. Emphasis original.
 - 20 As Edward Carr states it so clearly, “The facts of history do not come to us ‘pure,’ since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder.” See Edward Carr, *What is History?*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1987), 22.
 - 21 See Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: The University Press, 1992). Bourdieu’s “reflexive” scholarship, or “epistemic reflexivity,” is an attempt to elucidate the “conditions of knowledge” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 36–46). In this way, the conditions of knowledge are explored by interrogating data shown as evidence of certain theories, and by exploring the categories of thought, methods, and instruments of analysis that enter into practice in the analysis of a given problem. The researcher is necessarily engaged in a type of reflexive mode by moving between theory and evidence, by reflecting on his/her social positioning in doing certain work, and by exploring critically and reflexively what one’s assumptions are in exploring (and in not exploring) certain scholarly issues. For Bourdieu and Wacquant, “The most intimate truth of what we are, the most unthinkable unthoughts (*l’impensé le plus impensable*), is also inscribed in the objectivity and in the history of the social positions that we have held in the past and that we presently occupy. ... The

- history of sociology, understood as an exploration of the *scientific unconscious of the sociologist* through the explication of the genesis of problems, categories of thought, and instruments of analysis, constitutes an absolute prerequisite for scientific practice” (Ibid., 213f; emphasis original).
- 22 *Silencing the Past*, 27.
 - 23 Ibid., 48.
 - 24 Inspired by Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past*, Claudy Delné wrote his doctoral dissertation on how the Haitian Revolution has been occulted and trivialized in Western imagination through fictional narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Delné, *La Révolution haïtienne dans l’imaginaire occidental: Occultation, banalisation, trivialisation* (Port-au-Prince: Éditions de l’Université d’État d’Haïti, 2017).
 - 25 *Silencing the Past*, 82.
 - 26 Ibid., 103. Toussaint Louverture, the great military strategist of the Haitian Revolution, read Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher who had himself been a slave in Greece. He also read Abbé Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (Amsterdam, 1770). Abbé Raynal wrote about the practice of slavery in the “New World” and predicted the coming of a savior (a “Black Spartacus”) among the slaves who would be a visionary leader to help the slaves put an end to slavery. Toussaint thought himself to be the savior announced. Toussaint also read Caesar’s Commentaries, Herodotus, Des Claison’s *History of Alexander and Caesar*. See Madison Smart Bell, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 61. See also the now classic book by C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. revised (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).
 - 27 See Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry* 26.4 (2000): 821–865. In this article the author demonstrates clearly and convincingly how some of the leading European thinkers of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, who advocated for freedom as a fundamental human right, were seemingly incapable of including other non-European Others in their consideration. The African slaves in the French colony of Saint Domingue who fought successfully for their own freedom against the tyranny and the exploitation of the French were ignored in the historiographical analysis of these thinkers.
 - 28 Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (eds., Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1971); Gerd Lüdemann, *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, but Many: The Truth About Christian Origins* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000); James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*. 3rd edition (London: SCM Press, 2006); Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, eds., *A Companion to Second-century Christian “Heretics.”* Vol. 76. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae (Leiden; Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2005); Karen King, “Which Christianity?” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (eds., Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66–86; Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002); James H. Charlesworth, “Reflections on the Canon, Its Origins, and New Testament Interpretation,” in *Methods & Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of Harold*

- W. Attridge* (eds., Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2011), 505–530.
- 29 I am inspired in this sentence by Russell T. McCutcheon when he states, “The point I am trying to make throughout these chapters is exceedingly simple—the study of religion can be rethought as the study of an ordinary aspect of social, historical existence.” McCutcheon, *Critics, Not Caretakers: Redescribing The Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), Preface, xii. McCutcheon develops this thought further: “It is only when we start out with the presumption that religious behaviors are ordinary social behaviors—and not extraordinary private experiences—that we will come to understand them in all their subtle yet impressive complexity.” *Ibid.*, 14–15. It is with this caveat that I engage in my work here.
 - 30 See R. Alston, “Introduction: Rereading Ancient Slavery,” in *Reading Ancient Slavery*, 17.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, 13.
 - 32 See for example, *En marge du canon: Études sur les écrits apocryphes juifs et chrétiens* (eds., André Gagné and Jean-François Racine; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, coll. “L’écriture de la Bible,” 2012); *Rediscovering the Apocryphal Continent: New Perspectives on Early Christian and Late Antique Apocryphal Texts and Traditions* (eds., Pierluigi Piovaneli and Tony Burke; WUNT 349; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), and *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* (eds., Tony Burke and Brent Landau; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).
 - 33 For examples of what is possible and what is necessary to do in this way, one may refer to the excellent and tightly argued volume of Chris L. de Wet, *Preaching Bondage*. See also the section on slaves in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 207–274.
 - 34 See Gayatri C. Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 1990).
 - 35 Michel Foucault’s methodology of critiquing some traditional ways of thinking about politics and power, and his proposals for understanding the mechanisms and effects of power and knowledge differently, had also influenced some of the Subaltern Studies contributors (e.g., Partha Chatterjee and David Arnold). See especially Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, trans. Alan M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1971); *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (ed. Colin Gordon; London: Harvester Press, 1980); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977).
 - 36 Ranajit Guha, “Preface,” in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (ed. Ranajit Guha; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), vii.
 - 37 See Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); David Ludden, “A Brief History of Subalternity,” in *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning and the Globalization of South Asia* (ed. David Ludden; London: Wimbledon Publishing Company, 2002), 1–39.
 - 38 See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3–19.
 - 39 *Ibid.*, 20.
 - 40 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 96.
 - 41 On the question of whether the subaltern can speak, or transcend speech without ceasing to be subaltern, see Gayatri C. Spivak’s question about whether the

- subaltern can speak in her now classic essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (ed. P. Williams and L. Chrisman; New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 66–111, and her comments and clarification on this essay in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (ed. D. Landry and G. M. MacLean; New York: Routledge, 1996), 286–305. See also John R. Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Post-Contemporary Interventions; Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
- 42 Furthermore, Nial McKeown cautions us that "we must be careful not to 'rescue' the voice of the ancient slave by making it a distorted version of our own." See Nial McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 163.
- 43 *Provincializing Europe*, 112. In the context of explaining the concept of micro history, Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero remind us that "historical knowledge is always to some degree conjectural because historians must work like medical practitioners who cannot actually see most diseases but must diagnose their presence indirectly on the basis of telltale symptoms or signs." See *Microhistory & the Lost Peoples of Europe* (eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero; trans. Eren Branch; Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), Introduction, xvii. Notwithstanding the problematical image the presence of a disease in a sick body might invoke, the point is well taken.
- 44 See Laura McLure and André Lardinois, eds., *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- 45 I am here paraphrasing what Chakrabarty puts in a more elegant way: "Historians will grant the supernatural a place in somebody's belief system or ritual practices, but to ascribe it any real agency in historical events will go against the rules of evidence that gives historical discourse procedures for settling disputes about the past." Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 104. See also Rudolf Bultmann whose statement on the historical method is worth quoting at length: "The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect. This does not mean that the process of history is determined by the causal law and that there are no free decisions of men whose actions determine the course of historical happenings (...) All decisions and all deeds have their causes and consequences; and the historical method presupposes that it is possible in principle to exhibit these and their connection and thus to understand the whole historical process as a closed unity. This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural, transcendent powers and that therefore there is no 'miracle' in this sense of the word. Such a miracle would be an event whose cause did not lie within history." See Bultmann, "Hermeneutics and Theology," in *The Hermeneutics Reader* (ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer; Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), 244.
- 46 In other words, philosophical and religious discourses are expressions of competing voices and various social perspectives. See *Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms* (eds., Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015; WUNT: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament I, 348).
- 47 In this regard, Page duBois states, "There are in the ancient world some human beings without status, without standing, some bodies that are things, that bend gradually into the landscape of animals and of inanimate objects, that have property values without consciousness, without subjectivity, or whose subjectivity and

- consciousness represent a threat to mastery.” See Page duBois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 99.
- 48 R. Alston is worth quoting at length: “The slave can be re-presented because the slave is largely absent from our ancient discourses, sublimated to the master. If the slave is not present in the text, then the slave exists, has ontological status, outside the epistemes of conventional discourse. The slave is the unrepresentable, and the very existence of that which is unrepresentable is a threat to the established episteme. But the slave is also a real human, with a physical and emotional existence. The boundaries of the epistemic social human then are so drawn in conventional discourse that the real humans exist in opposition to or outside that framework. These humans may be slaves, but the very fact that slaves are not within the discourse creates a fundamental tension: the slave is always largely and potentially not a slave. Furthermore, the free is always potentially a slave. The result of this is that the structures of domination that establish the social formation of slavery are, then, remarkably fragile. Being a slave is not an ontological state (since that would be a state of not being), but a circumstantial state, and this does not change from Homer through to the second century CE.” Alston, “Introduction: Rereading Ancient Slavery,” in *Reading Ancient Slavery*, 25–26.
- 49 I take this quote from D. Chakrabarty when he states, “Here is a case of what I have called subaltern pasts, pasts that cannot ever enter academic history as belonging to the historian’s own position. These days one can devise strategies of multivocal histories in which we hear subaltern voices more clearly than we did in the early phase of *Subaltern Studies*. One may even refrain from assimilating these different voices to any one voice and deliberately leave loose ends in one’s narrative ...” *Provincializing Europe*, 105.
- 50 Ibid., 102.
- 51 See Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves*, 70.
- 52 Page duBois, *Slaves and Other Objects*, 31.
- 53 Ibid., 30.
- 54 See *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought* (ed., Stuart Sim; Cambridge: Icon Books, 1998), 366.
- 55 This joins the following quote: “Postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and the Subaltern Studies group led by Ranajit Guha examine this process of ‘othering’ by examining the way in which the signifying system of the centre, i.e. colonialist discourse, renders the experience of the subaltern, or colonial subject, as irrelevant as it is outside the system of normality and convention. Thus the colonial subject is ‘muted’ owing to its being constructed within a disabling master discourse.” Ibid. See Spivak’s critique of the notion of subaltern, as advanced by Guha, in her article, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 330–363.
- 56 K. Bradley, “‘The Regular, Daily Traffic in Slaves’: Roman History and Contemporary History,” *Classical Journal* 87 (1992): 125–138 (here 138).
- 57 More on this line of reflection later in the Conclusion.

SLAVES IN THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

A blow for a serving-boy
 A rebuke for a slave-girl
 And for all your slaves, discipline!

(*Ahiqar*, 83)

Many scholars have endeavoured to recover the figure of slaves in antiquity by focusing on different texts from the ancient Near East, Greek, Roman, and early Christian worlds.¹ However, there is still a gap in understanding the social, the political, and the literary dynamics around slaves as characters in a specific type of literature, that of the so-called pseudepigraphic literature. In this chapter, I go through this entire collection with the goal of highlighting how slaves are represented in them.² I show what it means to be a slave in these particular works by exploring the corporality of slaves.³ This is important since the (re)presentation of slaves in the mind of the ancient is rarely, if ever, directly concerned with the enslaved persons themselves.⁴

2.1 Slaves in the Sibylline Oracles

The Sibylline Oracles are a massive collection of Jewish, early Christian, and non-Christian oracular literature written in Greek and attributed to either a single sibyl—a female prophet—or to a number of prophetesses.⁵ There are few references to slaves or slavery in the Sibylline Oracles. The first one—in *Sib.* 2.320—is within an apocalyptic vision of a utopian future. The text states: “For there will be no poor man there, no rich, and no tyrant, no slave. Further, no one will be either great or small anymore. No kings, no leaders. All will be on a par together” (οὐ γὰρ πτωχὸς ἐκεῖ, οὐ πλούσιος, οὐδὲ τύραννος, οὐ δοῦλος, οὐδ’ αὖ μέγας, οὐ μικρός τις ἔτ’ ἔσται, οὐ βασιλεῖς, οὐχ ἡγεμόνες· κοινῇ δ’ ἅμα πάντες).⁶ A passage closely related to *Sib.* 2.320 is the baptismal formula used by Paul in Gal. 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentiles, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (ἐνὶ οὐκ Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην ἐνὶ οὐκ δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος ἐνὶ οὐκ ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ἐστε πάντες εἰς ἓν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Contrary to the

baptism formula, there is no reference to ethnicity or gender in the sibylline text, but the difference in the social dimension is clearly similar. The opposite to “slave” is “tyrant,” not “free.”⁷

Another text where slaves are mentioned is Sibylline 3.520: “But when a vast barbarian people comes against the Greeks it will destroy many heads of chosen men (...) They will burn well-constructed houses lawlessly with fire (3.525) and will take many slaves (literally, slave bodies, σώματα δοῦλα) to another land by compulsion.”⁸ This text prophesies a disastrous future for the Greeks and imagines many of them taken as slaves by force.⁹ Throughout these oracles, the future of those belonging to the people of Israel is assured, whereas the destiny of the nations is constructed as engulfed in all sorts of disasters. “As a slave you will be wed, without decorum” is the Sibyl’s oracle against Rome in 3.359.¹⁰ However, the Sibyl exhorts the Greeks to revere God and trust in him alone, and to offer sacrifices “at the Temple of the great God” in order to “escape the din of war and panic and pestilence” and avoid “the yoke of slavery” (λοιοῦ καὶ δοῦλον) (3.567). The oracles are not generous regarding the fate of some other nations in the following excerpt: “But Macedonia will bring forth a great affliction for Asia and a very great grief for Europe will spring up from the race of Cronos, the progeny of bastards and slaves.”¹¹

Thus far, we have seen that slaves are portrayed as degenerate and slavery is presented as a “yoke.” The condition of slavery is one that is shameful, that one must try to avoid.

Although we have not encountered specific slave characters in these oracles, the broader issue of slavery in these texts is worth exploring briefly to broaden our analysis. Three other texts are worth considering. The first text is 3.444: “You also, Rhodes, will indeed be free from slavery (ἄδούλωτος) for a long time, daughter of a day, and you will have great wealth thereafter, and you will have power at sea surpassing others.”

It is worth noting that Rome conquered Rhodes in 167 B.C.E. The Sibyl contemplates a reversal of positions in the eschatological future when the conqueror will be wed as a slave (3.355), and when a conquered nation such as Rhodes is envisioned as being free for a long time. Is it safe then to deduce that in these oracles there is an attempt to produce a discourse of resistance against empire, a stand against the tyrannical, the powerful and the rich?¹² As it is the trope of slavery that is of interest to us, we can see so far that the prophet is not interested in questioning slavery as such, which was part of normalcy in antiquity, but in imaginatively relegating nations that do not fall within her prophetic favor to the condition of slavery.¹³

The second text is 4.115: “An evil storm of war will also come upon Jerusalem from Italy, and it will sack the great Temple of God, whenever they put their trust in folly and cast off piety and commit repulsive murders in front of the Temple. Then a great king will flee from Italy like a runaway slave.”¹⁴ The image of a king fleeing like a runaway offender (δράστης φεύξει) is powerful,

even oxymoronic to have a powerful figure such as a king in such a precarious condition. Such an illustration from the prophet was intended to deter other dominating tyrants from ever daring to repeat such follies. Although the discourse portraying Nero as a runaway slave is quite powerful, it does not deter the sibyl from also fearing Nero's return (*Nero redivivus* or *Nero rediturus*), as one "brandishing a great spear" (4.138). Here one may see the construction of an imaginative response from a subaltern group that envisions tyrants as running for safety, while maintaining their construction as menacing figures.

The last text to consider briefly in the Sibylline Oracles is found in Book 14.352: "Men will inhabit the city which suffered much. No longer will there be deceitful gold or silver or acquisition of land, or laborious slavery (δουλείη πολύμοχθος), but one friendship and one manner for a merry people." The qualification attached to slavery simply means that slavery is, in fact, very hard labor. Books 11–14 constitute a group that outlines the period of the flood to the Arab conquest of Egypt (646 C.E.). However, it is difficult to situate Book 14 historically and to interpret it clearly, mainly because of its obscure historical allusions. In this eschatological prophecy, there is peace to the battered city of either Alexandria or Jerusalem and there is no room for deceit. Slavery will have no place in this idyllic place and time. The eschatological vision is that of friendship, but also of sameness, for a people that are merry. In summary, the Sibylline Oracles envisage slavery and slaves as utterly shameful. The eschatological vision is a time of friendship when all live together happily and free of hierarchy.

2.2 Slaves in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is a collection of 12 farewell discourses written in Greek and dated around the early part of the second century C.E. They constitute a product of the early Christ-followers myth-making process, integrating diverse elements of Jewish materials and Christian teachings to convey their theological conclusions and ethical considerations. In the *Testaments*, the experience of being taken as captives among the nations is highlighted (e.g., *T. Judah* 21.7; 23.4), but it is the reminiscence of the episodes of Joseph's life that garners much reference to slaves. The first reference to Joseph is in the *Testament of Zebulon*, which gives information regarding Joseph's garment when he was sold as a slave: "For they had taken off from Joseph his father's coat when they were about to sell him and put on him an old garment of a slave (ἱμάτιον δουλικόν)" (*T. Zeb.* 4.10).¹⁵ In his deathbed testament, Joseph recalls: "They sold me into slavery; the Lord of all set me free. I was taken into captivity; the strength of his hand came to my aid" (*T. Jos.* 1.5). Joseph exhorts his children to pursue "self-control and purity with patience and prayer with fasting in humility of heart" (10.2), so that even if one falls into the condition of slavery or is under false accusation, God "will rescue him from these evils" (10.3). Joseph recounts that as he was traveling with the Ishmaelites, they kept on asking him

whether he was a slave or not, and he replied: “I am a slave out of a household (δοῦλος εἰμι ἐξ οἴκου)” (11.2), but the eldest of the merchants said to Joseph: “You are not a slave (Οὐκ εἶ δοῦλος); even your appearance discloses that” (11.3). We know from Zebulon that Joseph was sold with a slave’s garment, so one may presuppose that the reference to Joseph’s appearance does not refer to his clothes but, rather, is an indication of Joseph’s demeanor; he was probably not one acting or speaking with a *habitus* the merchants expected from slaves.¹⁶ However, Joseph assured them he was a slave (11.4).

The issue of whether Joseph was a slave or not became more acute as the narrative unfolded. As they were reaching Egypt, it seemed to the merchants a good idea to leave Joseph in Egypt with a trader until they returned with their merchandise (11.5). There the trader placed Joseph as the one responsible for the management of his household and God prospered the trader’s household. Joseph was with him for three months. At that time, a certain wealthy Memphian woman was informed by her eunuchs that through a certain young Hebrew the trader had become rich.¹⁷ She informed her husband (Pentephris/Petephres) that the trader surely stole Joseph out of the land of Canaan: “Now, then, work justice concerning him; take the young man to your household, and the God of the Hebrews will bless you, because grace from heaven is with him” (12.3). Pentephris believed her words and confronted the trader, accusing him of stealing free individuals from the land of Canaan and selling them as slaves. The trader became afraid for his life; he fell at the feet of Pentephris, who was third in rank among Pharaoh’s officers, and explained that he did not know where Joseph was from since the Ishmaelites had left Joseph with him until their return. Pentephris did not believe the trader and had him beaten, but since the trader persisted in his statements, Pentephris summoned Joseph. Taking Joseph aside Pentephris asks him: “Are you a slave or a freeman? (Δοῦλος εἶ ἢ ἐλεύθερος).” Joseph lied and responded: “I am a slave, he said (ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπον Δοῦλος),” because, he explains to his children, he did not want to disgrace his brothers for having sold their own brother as a slave, but rather, wanted to honour them (10.6; 11.2; 13.6; 17.1).¹⁸

The issue here is that Pentephris wants to do what is right, socially speaking. He does not want to commit a property offence; he wants to make sure that if he takes this young man home as his possession and as a potential source of blessings for his household, based on the suggestions of his wife, he is not stealing someone else’s property for his own benefit. Joseph answers Pentephris’ enquiry in the positive; he is a slave of the Ishmaelites, bought out of the land of Canaan (13.7–8). However, the officer realized Joseph was lying, yet he treated him as a slave by having him stripped and whipped (13.9).¹⁹ In other words, although the officer realizes that Joseph was not a slave (it is not clear how he came to that conclusion), he nonetheless treats him as such. In the meantime, Pentephris’ wife was watching through the doors of her nearby residence as Joseph was being flogged like a slave. She

sent a message to her husband: “Your sentence is unjust, because you have punished as a wrongdoer someone who, though a freeman, was stolen” (κλαπεντα ἐλεύθερον τιμῶρεις, ὡς ἀδικησαντα) (14.1). This reproach from Pentephris’ wife seems to imply that a slave is by default a wrongdoer (ἀδικησαντα) and that her husband is acting in an unjust way (Ἀδικὸς ἡ κρίσις σου, 14.1) by having Joseph beaten naked, since in her understanding Joseph is not a slave, but a freeperson (ἐλεύθερον). The officer, since he has not received any statement from Joseph that he was not a slave, had him put in jail until the slave’s presumed masters arrive to claim their commodity. But the woman insists: “Why do you detain in bonds this young man who, though captive, is well-born (or, is of noble birth, εὐγενῆ παιδα)? Rather he should be set free and attended to by servants” (14.3).²⁰ The woman, in spite of her reproach to her husband of treating Joseph as a slave by beating him, wanted to have the young man as her sex toy, that is, as her slave. Joseph reasons in recounting the events to his children: “She wanted to see me by reason of her sinful passion, but I was ignorant of all these things” (14.4). Thus, when the Ishmaelites came back and upon learning that Joseph was not a slave but the son of a great man in the land of Canaan and that his father was mourning for him (15.1–3), they asked him: “Why did you tell us you were a slave?” (Τί ὅτι εἶπας σεαυτον δοῦλον εἶναι) (15.2). The merchants then conferred to sell Joseph and not to be discovered by the powerful father who might come to Egypt to avenge himself against them. This prompted the woman to say to the officer to buy the young man, for she heard the merchants were about to sell him. This is how Joseph describes the situation in his testament:

Immediately she sent a eunuch to the Ishmaelites, requesting them to sell me. But the eunuch was not willing to buy me and came away after testing them out. He told his mistress that they were asking a great deal of money for the boy. She sent the eunuch back again and told him, “Even if they are asking two minas; offer it. Do not be sparing of the gold; just buy the boy and bring him to me.” The eunuch went and gave them eighty pieces of gold and took me away, but he told the Egyptian woman he had paid a hundred (16.2–5).

As a slave owner, she wanted to gratify her sexual appetites by having this particular boy/toy as part of her household. She acknowledges he is a free-born, yet she wanted him to be within her household as a body she can try to seduce. Due to the strength of her craving for this particular body, she was willing to pay any amount asked for him. This intriguing episode involving Joseph and the other characters around the issue of the slave body is the last one we find on the issue of slaves in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

The narrative then jumps to the importance of harmony among brothers and how Joseph did not make any attempt to retaliate against his own brothers who sold him as a slave: “When my brothers came to Egypt they learned that I had returned their money to them, that I did not scorn them,

and that I sought to console them. After the death of Jacob, my father, I loved them beyond measure, and everything he had wanted for them I did abundantly in their behalf" (17.4–5). As we have seen, the issue of being a slave is quite pronounced in the *Testament of Joseph*. Slavery is a shameful condition that leaves one's body vulnerable to beatings. There are certain anxieties related to being a slave. Joseph, in this testament, narrates to his children that he accepted the label and the condition of a household slave without any legitimate family connection, so as not to shame his brothers. He was sold and bought; he accepted beatings; he was the prized desire of a rich Egyptian woman, but he did not let his slave body be used as a mere sexual object, although it would have afforded him to obtain certain social and material benefits.

Eventually, Joseph became a powerful figure in Egypt. He took as his wife the daughter of his masters, from whom he received a substantial dowry (18.3), and he himself became a slaveholder: "And my Lord made them my slaves" (ὁ κύριός μου αὐτοὺς κατεδούλωσεν).²¹

Considering the *Testament of Joseph* is a document, which, in its final form and its influence, was clearly situated in a particular Christian milieu and contains Christian interpolations, one may wonder how the image of the self-controlled hero and free male Joseph was a way for some groups to define themselves vis-à-vis others. In other words, is it possible to see in this document traces of some Christ-groups adapting that particular text to suit their own purposes in the early second century C.E.? These purposes were concerned with presenting members of Christ-groups as belonging to associations constituted of free individuals, as opposed to being members of communities composed of less reliable (slaves and poor) members of society.²² With such an ending, does the *Testament of Joseph* constitute an appeal to some Christ-followers to embrace the Roman Empire in order, eventually, to become the Holy Roman Empire as the Lord makes other members of society, or opponents to the new rulers, their slaves? These are some of the final words of the (Christian) patriarch as he is about to end his discourse:

And I saw a virgin born from Judah, wearing a linen stole; and from her was born a spotless lamb. At his left, there was something like a lion, and all the wild animals rushed against him, but the lamb conquered them, and destroyed them, trampling them underfoot. And the angels and mankind rejoiced over him (19.8–9).

2.3 Slaves in the *Testament of Job*

Most scholars agree that although the *Testament of Job* is written within the genre of a farewell discourse, it is nonetheless different from the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* in scope and purpose.²³ The deathbed setting is less

prominent, the ethical exhortations less pronounced, and the eschatological expectations minimal.²⁴ The text was composed in Greek during the first century B.C.E. or C.E., with a probable Egyptian provenance.²⁵ There is a close relationship between the *Testament of Job* and the Septuagint Book of Job—the *Testament* is dependent on the LXX version and the basic outline of the stories is similar; however, there are significant divergences between the two narratives.

The *Testament of Job* is replete with slaves. Taking the time to *notice* the slaves and read the text “from below” will not only help us to reimagine and reappraise this narrative, but that particular exercise will also show us that the slaves as characters may be conceived as playing a greater role in the text, although they are silenced for particular rhetorical and ideological purposes. By focusing on the slaves, one is engaged in an important analysis of revealing the silences and silent voices buried in the text.

The narrative conveys Job’s social importance by noting that he was accompanied by 50 slaves (πεντήκοντα παῖδας) who were to help him destroy the local “temple of the great God” (τὸν μὲν ναὸν τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ) situated near his house (5:2; 17.4).²⁶ Upon entering his house, Job orders his gatekeeper to secure the door (καὶ οὕτως ἀνεχώρησα εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου, κελεύσας ἀσφαλισθῆναι τὰς θύρας) (5:3). While Job was inside, Satan, disguised as a beggar, knocked at the door. The beggar said to the gatekeeper (τῇ θυρωρῷ): “Tell Job I wish to meet with him” (6:5). Job’s response to the doorman, however, was that he had no time now; he needed to σχολάζειν (that is, to take some time off, to be at leisure, or devote himself to study) (6.6). Later, when he heard that the visitor (Satan still disguised as a poor man with something analogous to a yoke on his shoulders) had departed and come back, now asking the doorman to request from her master a loaf of bread so he may eat (7.2), Job, in sheer exasperation, gave the gatekeeper a burnt loaf of bread to give to the poor stranger. He also orders her to tell the annoying poor visitor: “Expect to eat my loaves no longer, for you are estranged from me” (7.4).²⁷

The gatekeeper, an unnamed female slave, tries to salvage the situation by not being rude to a poor stranger because she feels her master should have welcomed a beggar at his door: “Then the doorman, ashamed to give him the burnt and ashen loaf of bread (for she did not know he was Satan), she took the good loaf of her own and gave it to him” (καὶ ἡ θυρωρὸς αἰδεσθεῖσα δοῦναι αὐτῷ τὸν κεκαυμένον καὶ σποδοεῖδην ἄρτον, εἰ μὴ ἔγνωκεν εἶναι αὐτὸν τὸν Σατανᾶν, ἦρεν ἐκ τῶν ἑαυτῆς ἓνα ἄρτον καλὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ) (7.5). In this delicate situation, the slave seems to be the one who cares to do what is right. Out of respect for the fate of the unfortunate one (αἰδεσθεῖσα), she offers to the beggar not burnt and ash-looking bread but her own good loaf. She acted this way without knowing she was doing a good deed that could have spared her master from the incoming loss Satan had planned to bring to Job’s life and his household. Because of her kind gesture, which had the potential to spare her master, Satan, knowing what has happened, rebukes the

slave: “Off with you, evil servant (Ἀπελθοῦσα, κακή δούλη). Bring the loaf of bread given you to be given to me” (7.7). In other words, Satan is condemning the slave woman for acting in such a way as to thwart his plan and because of that, he deems her a bad slave (κακή δούλη). This characterization affects her and pushes the female slave in a state of deep grief (λύπης μεγάλης). She consents she is a κακή δούλη. She is in despair because she knows well that a “wicked” slave may be punished with torture. Who is she, after all, than a mere slave who must always do as the master commands: “Truly, you well say I am an evil servant. For if I were not, I would have done just as it was assigned (προσετάχθη, prescribed, ordered, or commanded) to me by my master” (7.8–9).

In this narrative, Job’s *faux pas* and his rudeness to a stranger, because he wanted to have a time of leisure, created the hole through which Satan was able to use in attacking him. In spite of the slave’s effort to act on behalf of her master, she is put in her place as a slave, and as a disobedient one as such. She then had no choice except to bring to the stranger what the master had sent: “She brought him the burnt loaf of bread, saying to him, ‘Thus says my lord, “You shall no longer eat from my loaves at all, for I have been estranged from you. Yet I have given you this loaf of bread in order that I may not be accused of providing nothing to a begging enemy”’” (7.11). In the mouth of the slave, the narrator seems to try to portray Job not as a rude man, but as one who does give something to a beggar when asked. But how does Job know that this beggar is an enemy? How is this offer of this miserable loaf to a poor man any indication of Job’s fairness? Satan has the upper hand and the slave woman plays her role as a mere body in motion by being sent back to her master with these words to Job: “As this loaf of bread is wholly burnt, so shall I do to your body also. For within the hour, I will depart and devastate you” (7.13). It is only after the episode with the slave and Satan promising Job to treat him as a burnt loaf, that Satan goes to ask God to grant him permission or authority (ἐξουσίαν) over what belongs to Job (8.1–2).

The slave woman disappears from the narrative after this encounter. The narrator, in spite of introducing this intriguing episode involving the slave woman as exercising a much more prudent way of dealing with this poor and, apparently, helpless stranger, still wants to portray Job as a righteous man and to present Job’s slaves as receiving fair treatment from the patriarch. Contrary to the canonical account, Satan does not go in the presence of God first to ask for his permission to strike Job. In this text, a female slave stands between Job and Satan. The ugliness of life is played out in the figure of a master who wants to take some time to enjoy life without having to bother with the nagging of a beggar. This text touches only slightly on a slave, who sympathizes with the plight of the needy and treats an “enemy” well, but she is chastised and put in her place as a mere body, forced to follow orders like an automaton and thus lacking the volition and initiative to do what she perceives to be right.²⁸

After being struck by Satan, Job speaks about his fabulous life prior to his current situation of misery. He refers to the type of righteous life he has always tried to live. In doing so, Job leaves us with a picture of his relationship with his slaves that is worth exploring. Job used to have great wealth, but in the midst of his extraordinary and luxurious life his slaves grew quite weary of their workload (ἀπέκαμινον δὲ καὶ οἱ δοῦλοί μου οἱ τὰ τῶν χρηρῶν ἐδέσματα ἐψοῦντες) (13.5). They felt they were ill-treated and they wondered: “Who will give us some of his meat cuts to be satisfied?” (Τίς ἂν δόῃ ἡμῖν ἐκ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτοῦ) (13.6). Job could not understand why they were complaining because he considers himself a good and kind man: “Nevertheless, I was quite kind” (13.6). Job also had an odd and quite insensitive way of repaying and manipulating his slaves. He would play music to entertain them: “If my maidservants (my doorkeepers, αἱ θεράπαιναί μου) ever began murmuring (διεγόγγυζον), I would take up the psaltery and strum as payment (τὸν μισθὸν) in return. And thus make them stop murmuring in contempt (καὶ κατέπαυον αὐτὰς τῆς ὀλιγορίας τοῦ ψαλμου τουτεστιν γογγυσμοῦ) (14.4–5).

The *Testament of Job* is about life’s circumstances of loss and of survival.²⁹ Job’s loss presents points of connection between the conditions of his wife and himself and those of his former slaves. His humiliated wife (Sitis) is treated like a slave (ὡς δουλίδι) (21.4). In her sorrow, she cries profusely and laments: “I for my part am a wretch immersed in labor by day and night (ἐργαζομένη ἡμέρας ὀδυνωμένη καὶ ἐν νυκτι) (24.4). Job’s wife toils day and night so that she can bring him a bit of bread. The issue of bread carries us back to the beginning of the narrative when Job had plenty and treated the stranger at his door in an appalling manner by sending him a burnt loaf. Job’s slave working as a doorkeeper was the one who tried to preserve her master’s honour by treating a beggar decently. Now in the narrative, Job’s wife has become a household slave, working hard trying to provide a bit of bread to a poor, filthy and starving body of a husband sitting on the dung heap outside the city (21.1; 24.5–6).

There is no more honour to Job or to his wife: “So I ventured unashamedly (ἀναισχύντως) to go into the market.” As a former elite woman she was not in the habit of venturing out. Now, she was pierced in her heart to do so (24.7–8). In search for bread, Sitis learned she would have to give up the last symbol of honour she still possessed, namely her hair. For the bread seller (Satan in disguise, 23.1), the exchange is clear; he cannot simply give his bread away to a poor woman of the street who cannot pay: hair for bread!³⁰ She accepts. The bread seller then arose and cut Sitis’ hair disgracefully/without honour (ἀτίμως) in the market, while the crowd stood by and marveled (θαυμάζοντος) (24.10). Job’s wife is devastated; almost an entire chapter (chapter 25) is dedicated to lamenting the loss of her hair. Variations of the refrain are repeated: “Now she exchanges her hair for loaves!” At the end of her lamentations, she utters these words: “Job, Job! Although many things have been said in general, I speak to you in brief: In the weakness of my heart, my bones are crushed. Rise, take the

loaves, be satisfied. And then speak some word against the Lord and die. Then I too shall be freed (*ἀπαλλαγῆσομαι*) from weariness that issues from the pain of your body" (25.9–10).

Sitidos or Sitis has been totally transformed into a slave and her body eventually succumbed to this particular condition. Pieter W. van der Horst suggests that the name Sitidos (or Sitis) derives from *σίτος*, "bread," or *σιτίζω*, "to give bread, to feed." For him, "In view of the fact that in the story about Job's wife it is a dominant theme that she does everything in order to be able to give bread to Job daily," he presumes that "this unusual name has some connection with this motif."³¹ I agree with van der Horst, but I want to argue also that, in the narrative, Sitis is an embodiment of the very issue that propelled Job and his family into this miserable condition. In this degraded state, she carries on her very body the indelible marks of Job's lack of sensitivity to a poor stranger. In other words, she has assumed a position similar to but worse than that of the female slave Job had asked to act against her will.

Job's friends who came to visit could not fathom the utterly degenerate social and physical condition of their friend. While they were in deep philosophical and theological discussions, Job's wife arrived in tattered garments, fleeing from the servitude of the master she served (*ἀποδράσασα ἐκ τῆς τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότης δουλείας ᾧ ἐδούλευεν*) (39.1–2). One of Job's friends, shocked to see Sitis as a slave in rags and half-naked, tore his purple robe and threw it to her, appalled to see her body in this miserable condition (39.7). Sitis, the slave, is being exploited by her master. After her laments before her husband's visitors, she left for the city to discover, much to her chagrin, that her masters have confiscated her meagre livestock. That discovery took away any last strength she had left to survive. She went and lay down near a certain manger and too disheartened to continue enduring life's miseries, she died (40.5–6).³² In the evening, when her harsh master (*δεσποτικός αὐτῆς ἄρχων*) sought her and could not find her, he went into the folds of the herds to see whether she was there (40.8). Could this detail in the narrative be a subtle indication of something else? Could it mean that this corner where she now lay was the place she was accustomed to come to in order to find a (safe) space to respite, but also a place where the master knows she would try to hide and where he could go and abuse her sexually? The tyrannical master comes then in the evening to prey on his victim and finds her dead (40.8).

The poor of the city mourn the death of the slave Sitis. They lament that this woman who had once been full of pride and splendor (*ἡ τοῦ καυχήματος καὶ τῆς δόξης γυνή*) was now not even deemed worthy of a decent burial (*οἷ οὐ κατηξιώθη ταφῆς ἀναγκαίας*) (40.13). The poor were the ones who discovered what had happened to her; they found her dead body in the midst of the animals standing around her as if "weeping over her" (*κλαίοντα ἐπ' αὐτήν*) (40.11). It is as if the narrative is indicating to the reader that the slave body of the slave Sitis had become an animalized body, as if the living animals were mourning the departure of one of their own.³³

At the end of the narrative, the poor and the slaves seem to have taught the restored, but now dying, patriarch Job an important lesson, worthy of sharing with his children: “Do good to the poor. Do not overlook the helpless” (45.2). The poor, the orphans, the helpless and the slaves could not stop mourning the passing of Job at the end of the book:

Woe to us today! A double woe!
 Gone today is the strength of the helpless!
 Gone is the light of the blind!
 Gone is the father of the orphans!
 Gone is the host of strangers!
 Gone is the clothing of widows!
 Who then will not weep over the man of God?

The lament of the wretched of the earth over Job seems to indicate the general fear of the future for these people.³⁴ It took the powerful Job quite some time before he could really understand the plight of the poor; he had to be forced to become one of them in order for him to become a helper to them. Now that he is gone, the helpless, the blind, the orphans, the strangers, the widows and the slaves wonder who will be on their side. In a fit of deep emotional outbursts, the widows and orphans revolted and managed to block the entrance of the tomb where Job was to be laid (53.5). Nevertheless, after three days of protest and mourning and of anguish over the future, they had to let go.

The narrator concludes: “After three days they laid him in the tomb in a beautiful sleep, since he received a name renowned (ὄνομα ὀνομαστόν) in all generations forever. Amen” (53.8). By these lines, the memory of Job is well preserved and well assured. However, the memory of the female doorkeeper from the beginning of the story, who did not want to overlook what appeared to her a helpless stranger begging for bread, is not commemorated. Instead, she has been made to disappear from the narrative. Her past is not celebrated; she is merely a bad female slave (κακή δούλη); she is silenced and forgotten. Sitis’ memory also is silenced. As one who physically experienced what it means to be a slave, Sitis’ past is lost in the unidentified “Miscellanies” (40.14).³⁵

2.4 Slaves in the *Letter of Aristeas*

The *Letter of Aristeas* is a fictional composition, although it may conserve a few historical vignettes.³⁶ The dating of the text is problematic, but it is probably from the mid to late second century B.C.E.³⁷ The author, according to most scholars, is an anonymous Jew located in Alexandria and writing in Greek to other Jews and Greek sympathizers of Jews.³⁸ The narrator, named Aristeas, writes to a certain Philocrates (Aristeas’ brother) to explain how the

Jewish law has been translated from Hebrew to Greek.³⁹ Aristeeas is in the court of Ptolemy II as part of a Jewish delegation in charge of the translation project. The *Letter* starts off explaining not only the necessity of having the book of the Hebrews translated into Greek, but also how Aristeeas became concerned regarding the fate of the Jews in the Egyptian kingdom. In the midst of his linguistic mission, Aristeeas explains to his correspondent how he was able to play a significant role in the release of the Jews, who had been slaves in the kingdom of Egypt.

He reports how the Jews ended up as slaves in Egypt, beginning with them being “transported” (μετοικισθέντων, emigrating) to Egypt from Judea (4).⁴⁰ The narrator states: “We undertook this task with enthusiasm, seizing an opportunity with the king in connection with those who were transported to Egypt from Judea by the king his father, who was the original founder of the city and took over the government of Egypt” (4). In the development of the narrative, the dire situation of the deportees becomes clearer, although the narrator places the blame not on the king but on his troops: “As we said previously, he selected the best, outstanding in youth and strength, and armed them. The remaining number, old men, children, and women also, he let go into slavery (οικερίαν), not so much out of any personal predilection for such a course, but because he was prevailed upon by his troops on account of the services which they had given in the trials of war” (14). The tone of the text becomes more engaged in its presentation of how the people from Judea were taken as captives and reduced to slavery. The clarity of the condition of the inhabitants of Judea who were reduced to becoming prisoners of war is enhanced when the author mentions that he petitioned for the release of those subjected to misery:

Let it never be unreasonable to be refuted by events themselves, O King. The laws have been established for all the Jews, and it is our plan not only to translate but to also interpret them, but what justification shall we have for our mission, as long as large numbers are in subjection in your kingdom (ἐν οικερίαις ὑπαρχόντων ἐν τῇ σῇ βασιλείᾳ)? But out of your unsullied and magnanimous soul release those who are subject to misery (15).

The number of people forced into this condition of slavery is quite large: “A little more than one hundred thousand” (19). He begged the king to release all the slaves (16, 20, and 22). For the author, it was an injustice to enslave these people without any good reason (24). He managed to convince the king, who was flattered at the suggestion that he was a magnanimous and generous monarch, to show his mercy by releasing the slaves, including the slaves of the royal bankers’ troops (26). The king then decrees:

It is our opinion that these prisoners were taken contrary to the wishes of our father in a manner quite improper, and that excessively

drastic military action caused the destruction of their land and the transportation of the Jews into Egypt. The assistance from the soldiers given along the plain was quite enough, and the enslavement of these men is accordingly entirely inequitable. We have a reputation of dispensing justice to all men, and all the more to those who are enslaved without good reason; our overall aim is that which promotes justice and piety in all things. We have accordingly decreed that all Jewish personnel in slavery (everywhere) in the kingdom for whatever reason shall be released ... (23, 24).

The text also mentions that even babies still on their mothers' breasts were considered slaves and that the author was able to plead for and was pleased at the release of the infants with their mothers (πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ τῶν ἐπιμαστιδίων τέκνων σὺν ταῖς μητέρας ἐλευθεροῦντο (27). The king was convinced by Aristeeas and announced the release of all the prisoners, that is, all those who were "uprooted (ἀνασπάστους, dragged up, compelled to emigrate) from Jerusalem ... and came to Egypt as prisoners (αἰχμαλώτους)" (35). The issue of slaves is not mentioned afterwards in the text.

One idea worth exploring is how the issue of bondage and freedom may serve as an important point of entry into the narrative. The theme of a New Exodus has been explored before concerning this text.⁴¹ The "Exodus paradigm" at work in the *Letter*, in Sylvie Honigman's analysis is manifest, firstly, in the freeing of the Jewish slaves (12–27), through the generosity of the king acting as a "benevolent Pharaoh." The second element of the Exodus paradigm is the selection of the 72 translators from the 12 tribes of Israel playing the role of representatives of the people, which recalls the 70 elders whom Moses took with him onto Mount Sinai in Exodus 24 (46–50). Finally, the reading of the Law and its acceptance by the people (308–310), is reminiscent of the second giving of the Law. But one may go further by highlighting how the whole power dynamic is shifting from the Egyptians to the Jews throughout the narrative. Most scholars recognize the *Letter* as idealized and apologetic literature. The analysis undertaken therein does not pretend to be based on any historical reality. What is of interest to me is to probe briefly what the author might be imagining and reimagining in terms of the positioning of these different communities and how his own life's circumstances may have had some influence in the shaping of his narrative. The translators-philosophers, when tested by the king, reveal they possess wisdom and knowledge surpassing that of the Egyptians (235). The sage-translators, in a sense, eventually conquer the king who prostrates himself several times (before them or before God?):

And when they had shown what had been covered and unrolled the parchments, he paused for a long time, did obeisance (προσκυνήσας) about seven times (177). The translators let the king know that God

is the sovereign one who provides for all and they urged him to follow God: “You must know that God governs the whole universe with kindness and without any anger, and you, O king, he said, ‘must follow him’” (γινώσκειν δὲ δεῖ, διότι θεὸς τὸν πάντα κόσμον διοικεῖ μετ’ εὐμενείας καὶ χωρὶς ὀργῆς ἀπάσης· τούτῳ δὲ κατακολουθεῖν ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστί σε, ἔφησεν, ὁ βασιλεὺς) (254).

At the end of the narrative, the king bows down (προσκυνήσας) once again when he hears Demetrius’s report about the translation (317).

The translators, although they occupy a different social position than most, if not all, of the deportees, are from the same place that was ravaged. The slaves deported from Judea to Egypt are of the same cultural or religious stock as them. The narrative progresses to show how, through this delegation of intellectuals, another issue—that of the Jewish slaves in a particular social and political context—was resolved and it also shows how, through the translation project, the former slaves could become more engaged in the negotiations of their identities in their diasporic social location.⁴² At the beginning of the narrative, the deportation of the people is mentioned. At the end of the narrative, the departure of the Jewish translators is in view. The text starts with the narrator telling Philocrates how he sought to have the liberation of the slaves; the end of the *Letter* relates the translators receiving gifts from the king. The text moves from one group serving the elites—albeit forced to do so as slaves living in misery—to another group, that of the king’s servants, serving the translators who become the friends of the king and thus gain unlimited access to the royal palace (317–321).

The *Letter* has a macro perspective that goes beyond the linguistic interest, one that transcends how the Hebrew text was translated into Greek, the timing of which most scholars would place in the early part of the third century B.C.E. The writer is writing at a different time than the alleged “historical” accounts reported. In the text, he expresses his particular concerns, interests, and ideology,⁴³ which is in line with Benjamin Wright’s suggestion of possible motivations: “a response to some contemporary crisis, a polemic targeting the emergence of rival translations, or certain problems of Hellenism and Judaism.”⁴⁴ The writer, I argue elsewhere, is engaged in capturing the dynamics of the hybrid condition of diaspora living by resorting to exploring how one could live in such conditions through calculated negotiations, prudent affiliations, and idealized memory.⁴⁵ In this sense, one may ask: What if the author himself was confronted with diasporic conditions that pushed him to develop these strategies? What would be some of the circumstances that the author was facing that would have led him to start a narrative showing the Jewish people as slaves under a foreign ruler and end the text with a benevolent monarch giving gifts to the representatives of the Jewish people? What would have propelled the author of the *Letter* to place God—not a mere

ethnic God, but the creator of all, though recognized by means of different names by different groups (16)—as the sovereign one over all, who is able to set things right and reverse the circumstances, where the slaves are set free and where the powerful of the world bow to his “gentle” power and are exhorted to follow him? I cannot answer these questions except to suggest that, although the macro perspective of the *Letter* goes beyond its linguistic interest, the translation is situated within a context that includes questions of power and of social-political positioning of elites in a particular diasporic community. The portrayal of the cultural translators as formidable intellectuals serving a powerful God, and the author serving as an ambassador who assured the release of the Jewish slaves, becomes central in contesting the spaces of margins and center and who, in the end, speaks, and who is at the service of whom.

2.5 Slaves in the Book of *Jubilees*

The Book of *Jubilees* or “The Little Genesis” is a retelling/rewriting of the Genesis account and a recasting of the introductory chapters of Exodus (chapters 1–12).⁴⁶ The author elaborates on the text in light of his own social and political milieu, his interests, and theological understandings.⁴⁷ This unknown author, who probably lived in Palestine, composed this text somewhere around 160 and 130 B.C.E., when the Maccabees rebelled against Antiochus IV.⁴⁸ The text was originally composed in Hebrew and was translated into Greek. From Greek, it was rendered into the ancient Ethiopic language of Ge‘ez. The Ethiopian Church has conserved the Ge‘ez version in a format close to its original version as an integral part of its scriptural canon.⁴⁹ Most scholars agree that the author of *Jubilees* did not view his composition as a replacement for the existing accounts, but that he possibly understood his rewriting as part of God’s inspiration to him to explain existing materials. He also understood that his additional materials might have been “part of God’s revelation to Moses during the 40 days and nights he was said to have spent in God’s presence on Mount Sinai (Exod. 24.18).”⁵⁰ The literary device used is in the form of a revelation to Moses by the angel of the Presence. The author of the book aims to instruct and to encourage his contemporaries to cling on to the law by obeying it due to the urgency of the times.

The author saw the law as a basic expression of Israel’s distinctiveness. His use of Genesis helps him to set the covenant within the context of election. It is because they are God’s elect that they need to be holy, to separate themselves from the Gentiles, and to obey the commandments—mostly the ones that govern one’s behaviour towards God. The ethnic-religious identity manifested in the keeping of the law is presented as the paradigm for the measurement of all human acceptability to God. The law maintains pre-eminence over all. The author of *Jubilees* presents the view that it is more than

necessary for Jews to keep both themselves and their traditions pure from defilement. The author uses elaborated narrative details, and even the insertion of new episodes, to convey his message. He also draws from the patriarchal narratives to derive specific laws and *halakhot*, and presents these as immutable laws, which are often said to be inscribed on the heavenly tablets (3:31; 4:32; 16:29). The whole narrative is set within a chronological structure, using “Jubilees” (seven periods of seven years) as the framework.

There is not much material to reflect on with regard to the issue of slaves in the text, except, perhaps, in one instance. *Jubilees* reflects on the narrative of Noah’s curse of Canaan in Genesis 9:25 by revising it slightly. In Genesis 9:25, one reads: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱרֹרָה כְנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים יִהְיֶה לְאֻמָּתוֹ (And he said: Cursed be Canaan. A slave of slaves, “the lowest of slaves” (NRSV), you will be to your brothers). The condition reserved to Canaan for uncovering his father’s nakedness is servitude of the most degrading degree. God blesses Shem in 2:26 and makes Canaan his slave. The Septuagint renders the passage thus: καὶ εἶπεν ἐπικατάρατος Χανααν παῖς οἰκέτης ἔσται τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ. Both παῖς and οἰκέτης may be translated as “slave” (e.g., Gen. 44:16) and the rendering of the Hebrew seems to indicate an emphasis on the condition of being a slave as well. The Ethiopic of *Jubilees* 7.10 has “a laboring slave,” or a “slaving slave” (ቅኑዓንተገብረ), which also maintains Canaan’s future slave status, but it does not clearly place the offender as a slave below all other slaves (the lowest of slaves). O. S. Wintermute’s translation of the *Jubilees* passage is: “And he cursed his son and said, ‘Cursed is Canaan, let him be an enslaved servant of his brothers.’”⁵¹ The following translations capture exactly what the text says: “An enslaved servant,” “un serviteur, esclave de ses frères,” “ein dienender Knecht sei er seinen Brüdern.” However, they do not quite equate being “a slave of slaves.” The question then is: Why would the author choose to make this allegedly very small change to the Genesis text?⁵²

2.6 Slaves in *Joseph and Aseneth*

Joseph and Aseneth is a second- to third-century (no later than 200 C.E.) Jewish novel, written in Egypt and originally composed in Greek, with possible Christian interpolations.⁵³ The book has been seen as “religious propaganda aimed at portraying Judaism in the best possible light.”⁵⁴ Most scholars agree that the targeted audience is native Jews, Jewish sympathizers, or proselytes, who would have enough background to understand the different Scriptural allusions and Jewish customs.⁵⁵ The text exists in two variants—a longer and a shorter version—with some major differences between them.⁵⁶

The romance has several examples of slaves and offers several illustrations of the trope of being a slave. I will demonstrate how the narrative builds itself around the question of who is master and who is slave and what that dialectic relationship entails. In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the past is recounted with the mention of the presence of slaves as characters, but their presence is

accounted for aggrandizing the liminal figure, Joseph. Aseneth became Joseph's slave, although she remains a mistress to others.

The first instance of slaves in the narrative is in the presentation of seven rather mysterious virgins who served one of the main characters of the tale, namely Aseneth. They are presented thus: "And seven virgins (ἐπτὰ παρθένοι) occupied the remaining seven chambers, each having one chamber, and these were waiting (διακονοῦσαι) on Aseneth, and they were all of the same age, born one night with Aseneth, and she loved them very much. And they were beautiful, like the stars of heaven, and no man ever conversed with them, not (even) a male child" (2.6). These virgins are present for Aseneth when she is depressed, notably on the occasion when she locks herself up in her room because of her impossible love for Joseph: "And they heard Aseneth's sighing and weeping and said to her, 'What have you, mistress (δέσποινα), and why do you feel so sad, and what is it that is bothering you? Open (the door to) us, and we will see what you have'" (10.5–6).⁵⁷ We find another mention of these virgins later when Aseneth is in conversation with a heavenly visitor. She is blessed by the heavenly man and she wants him to bless the virgins as well: "And Aseneth said to the man, 'Lord, with me are seven virgins ministering to me, fostered with me from my childhood, born with me in one night, and I love them as my sisters'" (17.4). The visitor promises these seven virgins that they will be the seven pillars of the future City of Refuge that Aseneth will embody (15.6–7). The last mention of the seven virgins is in 19.2, when Aseneth hurries down to meet Joseph, the man she desperately loves.

Joseph is presented as a very powerful man (4.8–9) and throughout the narrative he is placed as the master *par excellence*, to whom others bow. When he arrives at the house of Pentephres (Aseneth's father), he causes every single body there to move. One of Pentephres' slaves rushes in to announce the arrival of the important visitor (5.1). Aseneth goes to her room on the upper floor to look out from the window at Joseph entering the house (5.2). Pentephres and his wife go out to meet Joseph (5.4); strangers are kept at bay (5.9–10), and the whole company, except Aseneth, "went and prostrated themselves (προσεκύνησαν) face down to the ground before Joseph" (5.10). Upon entering the house, Joseph sits on the throne (7.1). This posturing of Joseph at Pentephres' house seems to indicate his political future in the whole kingdom. The narrative confirms this at the end when it mentions Joseph's reign in Egypt for 48 years (29.9).⁵⁸

Aseneth feels the need to disassociate herself from her family in order to become Joseph's slave. She prays to be given to Joseph as a female slave so that she may serve him forever (εἰς παιδίσκην καὶ εἰς δούλην καὶ δουλεύσω αὐτῷ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον, 6.8). In her prayer of repentance, she considers herself an orphan (11.12) and cries out to God, who is the father of orphans (ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὀρφανῶν) and a protector of the persecuted (11.13). She prays that God will commit her to become "a maidservant and a slave" to Joseph (παιδίσκην καὶ δούλην) (13.15), and she elaborates on her dream-life as

Joseph's slave: "And I will make his bed, and wash his feet, and wait on him (διακονήσω αὐτῷ), and be a slave for him and serve him (καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ δούλη καὶ δουλεύσω αὐτῷ) for ever (and) ever" (13.15). Aseneth becomes a slave to Joseph's deity and she asks: "Be gracious, Lord, to your slave (τῆς παιδίσκης σου), and spare your maidservant, because I have spoken boldly before you all my words in ignorance" (17.10). Her slavery is first mental and spiritual before it becomes tangible in her service to the luminary figure, Joseph. Her slavery is first conceptualized and aestheticized before she becomes a slave/a female body attached to a powerful man. She is constructed with reference to Joseph by a process of cultural "Othering."⁵⁹

Aseneth is mesmerized by the idea of becoming a slave to Joseph. Her newfound faith places her in the right religious condition to be with him. In a sense, her encounter with the heavenly man prepares her to find favor with the earthly man. She now has a beauty that is simply heavenly and everyone who sees her marvels at her new beauty. However, even if she considers herself a slave to Joseph, her foster-father is still bound by the social norms and social realities that regulate his life, and to him she is still a powerful woman: "Everything is prepared as you have commanded (προσέταξας)" (18.11). Aseneth's father is filled with fear when he sees her in her new and extraordinary beauty. He becomes speechless and acts as if he was in the presence of an otherworldly figure. He fell at her feet and said: "What is this my mistress (δέσποινά μου), and what is this great and wonderful beauty?" One can observe that, on the one hand, Aseneth perceives herself a slave to Joseph's deity and to Joseph, but on the other hand, her social standing remains the same, and she is still viewed, addressed, and obeyed as someone with authority.⁶⁰

Another slave comes into the picture. It is a little boy (παιδάριον) who announces to Aseneth that Joseph is standing at the door (19.1). Receiving master Joseph is Aseneth's mission. She goes out to receive Joseph, who is immediately struck by her extraordinary newfound beauty. Joseph is not sure who this woman is: "Who are you? Quickly tell me" (19.4). In responding, Aseneth reverts to her mental conditioning of accepting him as the master whom she wants to serve: "I am your maidservant Aseneth" (ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ παιδίσκη σου Ἀσενέθ) (19.5). Like a king summoning a favorable subject to his presence, Joseph stretched out his hands and called Aseneth "by a wink of his eyes," and "Aseneth also stretched out her hands and ran up to Joseph and fell on his breast" (19.10). Upon reaching each other, they began to kiss. With each kiss Joseph imparted a new spirit to Aseneth (spirit of life, spirit of wisdom, and spirit of truth) (19.11). Then the slave Aseneth led master Joseph in the house, seated him on her father's throne (20.2), and brought water to wash her master's feet (20.3). Embarrassed for her, Joseph quipped: "Let one of the virgins come (ἡκέτω μία ἐκ τῶν παρθενῶν σου) and wash my feet" (20.3). But the slave Aseneth insists: "No, my Lord, because you are my lord from now on, and I (am) your maidservant" (ἐγὼ παιδίσκη σου) (20.4).⁶¹ Thus, before occupying the throne of Pharaoh, Aseneth invites him to come

and sit on the throne of her father, Pentephres (20.2). Here, she washes his feet; an ominous sign of what is to come for the whole kingdom.⁶²

Another intriguing part of the narrative that involves the figure of slaves is when Pharaoh's son enlists the help of Joseph's brothers Dan, Gad, Naphtali and Asher to ambush Aseneth. The prince was able to convince them to engage in such actions by lying to them about an alleged conversation he had overheard between Joseph and the Pharaoh. He claims to have heard Joseph mentioning to Pharaoh that his brothers Dan, Gad, Naphtali and Asher were sons of slave women and that they were not truly his brothers. Joseph is reported to have said: "I will wait for my father's death and (then) I will blot them out from the earth and all their offspring lest they share the inheritance with us, because they are children of maidservants (τέκνα παιδισκῶν εἰσιν) (24.8). And these (men) have sold me to the Ishmaelites, and I will repay them according to the whole insult of theirs which they committed against me wickedly" (24.9–10). This whole saga created a rift within the family; some brothers remained faithful to Joseph and protected Joseph's wife, Aseneth, fighting those who wanted to harm her. Aseneth had to intervene so that the brothers protecting her would not kill those lured into harming her. The losing party bows down to Aseneth and pleads with her to save them: "And now we, your slaves (καὶ νῦν δεόμεθά σου ἡμεῖς, οἱ δοῦλοί σου) beg you, have mercy on us and rescue us from the hands of our brothers, because they arrived as avengers of the insult (done to) you, and their swords are against us. And we know that our brothers are men who worship God and do not repay anyone evil for evil. Anyway, be gracious to your slaves, mistress, before them" (28.4–6). Aseneth becomes the mistress who rescues Joseph's brothers, but remains the slave of Joseph.

Joseph's faithful brothers wanted to kill their brothers who were in fact born to slave women and who were planning to harm Aseneth, based on the prince's false report. And behold, the sons of Leah came running after the sons of their father's female slaves in order to kill them, but Aseneth intervened favorably on behalf of the sons of the slaves. So when the brothers born to the free women saw Aseneth, "they prostrated themselves on the ground before her" (προσεκύνησαν αὐτήν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν) (28.9) and, after hearing what she had to say about the other party, Simon said to her: "Why does our mistress (δέσποινα ἡμῶν) speak good (things) on behalf of her enemies? No, but let us cut them down with our swords ..." (28.12). Aseneth was able to convince them to forgive and to live in peace as brothers (29.14). However, Pharaoh's son, who had been wounded by a stone from Benjamin during the attempted ambush in collusion with some of Joseph's brothers, was dying. Upon seeing his son in such a state and after learning all that had happened from Joseph's brother Levi, the great Pharaoh "rose from his throne and prostrated himself before Levi and thanked him" (καὶ ἀνέστη φαραὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ καὶ προσεκύνησε τῷ Λεὼ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ευχαρίστησεν αὐτῷ) (29.6). The prince succumbed to his wounds after three days and his death

precipitated the death of the Pharaoh who fell ill from mourning his son. The death of Pharaoh meant the beginning of Joseph's 48-year reign (29.11). Strangely, Aseneth is not mentioned as the queen reigning alongside her husband. She is rhetorically silenced and seems to remain a mere slave/female body to him.

2.7 Slaves in the Wisdom literature

The figure of the slaves in some of the Wisdom and philosophical texts challenges the very notion of wisdom that these texts purport to share with their readers. I will demonstrate how slaves in *Ahiqar*, in 3 Maccabees, in *Pseudo-Phocylides*, and in the *Sentences of the Syria Menander* are ascribed little value and function as stock characters for a pedagogical effect—to teach masters how to be better masters.

The disposable body of a slave in Ahiqar

The Aramaic *Ahiqar* sayings-material, on which the analysis undertaken here is based, is a fifth-century B.C.E. document from Elephantine (Egypt). The narrative of *Ahiqar* is about wisdom.⁶³ *Ahiqar*, an experienced and wise counselor to the king of Assyria (King Sennacherib), proposed that his nephew Nadin (or Nadan),⁶⁴ whom he adopted as his son, become the counselor to the new king (King Esarhaddon). Nadin, however, having come into the position, intimated to the king that *Ahiqar* did not have the well-being of the king in mind; instead, the aged man's intention was to plot against the new counselor and the new leader in order to place himself as supreme ruler in the kingdom. Furious, the king gives orders to his officers to capture the traitor and to kill him. When the chief officer Nabusumiskun got hold of *Ahiqar*, the old man reminded the officer of how well he served the king by providing the monarch with sound advice, and how he rescued the officer when he needed protection from the wrath of the former king. *Ahiqar* assured the officer that his nephew/adopted son was the one trying to usurp power. The chief officer was convinced of the innocence of *Ahiqar*: "Far be it from us to kill him! There is a eunuch-slave of mine. Let him be killed between these two mountains in place of this *Ahiqar*. When it is reported, the king will send other men after us to see the body of this *Ahiqar*. Then they will see the body of this eunuch-slave of mine (and that will be the end of the matter) ..." (*Ahiqar* 62–64). In this brief reference to the eunuch,⁶⁵ there is no mention of his name, or any qualm about his body being used and disposed of. The surrogate body of this slave will be used to preserve the body of one who is wise and valuable for the continuation of power. The body of the eunuch-slave is considered a mere object that belongs to the officer. It is his to use and dispose of as he wishes. There is no agency on the part of the slave; he is a vulnerable body with no intrinsic value, except to serve his owner.

Once his body serves its purpose, assuring the survival of the wise man, then, “that will be the end of the matter,” and he can be discarded. The deception of the king by his chief officer in order for wisdom to continue unabated is part of the normative universe of the narrative. Deception and the murder of a slave followed by the discarding of his body pose no ethical problem; these acts are deemed necessary to assure the continuity of wisdom in *Ahiqar*.

Based on other accounts of the story, Ahiqar was reinstated to his position and Nadin was disgraced and punished.⁶⁶ The elaboration of the wisdom sayings with regard to slaves in *Ahiqar* is precise: slaves need to be kept under discipline. The following texts make this clear:

מחאה לעלים A blow for a serving-boy
 כאיה לחנת a rebuke for a slave-girl
 אף לכל עבדיך אלפנא and for all your servants, discipline! (83)

“He who acquires a runaway slave or a thievish maid [... ruins] the reputation of his father and his progeny by his own corrupt reputation (84).”⁶⁷ In other words, the acquisition of a runaway slave or of a maid of ill repute tarnished the reputation of the slave’s owner.⁶⁸ However, killing one’s slave, especially for the sake of saving the life of a reputable and wise counselor and benefactor, does not taint one’s reputation.⁶⁹ The particular perspective of the text is that of those in positions of power. The possession of wisdom is the mechanism by which one has access to the king. The counselor is judged based on his performance. Ahiqar possesses wisdom to negotiate different circumstances of life. He is shrewd and knows how to move from danger into auspicious situations. The episode concerning the surrogate body is central to the continuation of the narrative. Without it, a different outcome is inevitable. One may read the text and be so taken by the intrigue of the narrative that they will fail to even notice the enslaved person in it. Reading to *notice* silent voices and engaging the gaps, the silences, and the muted presences is an intricate exercise in reading against the grain. Highlighting the presence of the disposable body in the text is an effort to pay attention to the humanity of a particular human being in a text that does not give him any value. This specific reading stance is important, not just in assuming the humanity of slaves “as the simple predicate for any historical investigation,”⁷⁰ but also in “‘discovering’ slaves’ humanity as a contribution or conclusion of scholarly investigation.”⁷¹

2.8 Slaves in 3 Maccabees

Another wisdom text worthy of consideration is 3 Maccabees. In spite of the similarities in names, the fictional story of 3 Maccabees does not exhibit any relation with the historical Maccabean uprising as depicted in 1 and 2 Maccabees. 3 Maccabees is an ancient novel that contains few historical allusions

with the aim of advancing some ideological arguments.⁷² Most scholars agree that 3 Maccabees was originally written by an Alexandrian Jew, who composed this document in Greek for a Greek-speaking Jewish audience in Alexandria.⁷³ The document is usually dated around 150–30 B.C.E.⁷⁴ The aim of the brief entry into this text is to show how the interpretation of this text becomes richer, and perhaps even problematic, when one approaches the narrative “from below,” that is, from the perspective of highlighting the presence of slaves as characters in it. The focus will be on a particular character by the name of Hermon.

In 3 Maccabees 5, we encounter a certain slave named Hermon. I identify Hermon as a “slave” even if he is not explicitly called one in the text. One may argue that he is an administrative person, who is in danger of being killed because of the king’s caprice. However, I would argue that the vulnerability of his body to abuse including beatings identifies him as a slave. In addition, there is plenty of evidence from ancient sources that a slave could be in an administrative position.⁷⁵ Hermon receives orders from the king (Ptolemy Philopator) who was, “filled with stern anger and completely inflexible” (5:1), to drug all the elephants so that they would become uncontrollable and kill all the Jews rounded up at a feast, for the pleasure of the king and his friends.⁷⁶ The Jews, upon hearing this plan, cried out to God to deliver them and God sent the king into a deep sleep. He was then unable to give any orders to annihilate the Jews, at least on this macabre occasion of planned destruction. When the king was finally shaken awake and finished an obligatory period of fellowship with his guests, he “summoned Hermon and with severe threats, inquired of him why the Jews had been allowed to survive that day” (τὸν Ἑρμῶνα προσκαλεσάμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς μετὰ πικρᾶς ἀπειλῆς ἐπυνθάνετο, τίνος ἔνεκεν αἰτίας εἰάθησαν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τὴν περιούσαν ἡμέραν περιβεβηκότες) (5:18). The slave Hermon is fearful that he will be blamed for the delay in the massacre of the Jews. He is diligent in his work (5:26), but the angry king, whose mind has, for a little while, been made totally blank by God, does not quite understand why the populace wants to be entertained by the killing of the Jews. The confused king then threatens the slave: “If your parents or your offspring were here, I would have served them as an ample meal to the wild beasts (τήνδε θηρσὶν ἀγρίοις ἐσκεύασα ἂν δαμιλῇ θοῖναν) instead of the Jews, against whom I have no complaint and who above all others showed an absolutely unflinching loyalty to my ancestors” (5:31). One may argue on the basis of the following sentence from the king that Hermon cannot be a slave: “Indeed, if it were not for the affection (καίπερ εἰ μὴ διὰ τὴν τῆς συντροφίας) that comes of our habitual companionship and your service ...” (5:32). However, before reaching a too hasty conclusion on the matter one needs to consider the rhetorical force of the statement and who utters it. On the one hand, there is the rhetoric of the king and, on the other hand, the social and political reality as lived by the character Hermon. In other words, there is the perception of the powerful and the difficult reality of one who is

threatened and lives in constant fear. Simply put, there is the bully who considers the bullied his companion, and the tormented servant who needs to be extremely careful in how he deals with the powerful tyrant to avoid being crushed. We cannot be conclusive about the exact meaning of the monarch's reference to affection (συντροφίας), but one may not exclude the possibility that it may also refer to sexual relationship which might have existed between one powerful figure who is able to use the other as his sexual toy. The logic of this wisdom tale seems to be that the slave owner is always right and that the slave is a mere body-in-motion that is expected to be violently dominated: "So Hermon met with an unexpected and dangerous threat and he cast his eyes down and his face fell" (οὕτως ὁ ἑρμων ἀπροσδόκητον ἐπικίνδυνον ὑπήνεγκεν ἀπειλὴν καὶ τῇ ὀράσει καὶ τῷ προσώπῳ συνεστάλη) (5:33). The slave is utterly confused when the king, once more, arranges to have a similar banquet to entertain his guests with the spectacle of the killing of the Jews. The king then summoned the slave and said menacingly: "How often, wretch (ἀθλιώτατε), must I give you orders on the self-same matters? Fit out the elephants right now for tomorrow for the extermination of the Jews" (5:37–38). However, the prayers of the Jews were once more heard and God sent two angels from heaven to confront the adversaries of his people, causing the elephants to turn on the armed forces, trampling them down. After this episode, Hermon is no longer mentioned in this religious propaganda.

The last mention of slaves in 3 Maccabees is in chapter 7:5. There the king is writing a letter on behalf of the Jews to the generals in Egypt. He blames some of his friends and considers them traitors for having persuaded him to inflict punishments on the Jews: "So they brought them down with atrocious treatment, as *slaves* or rather conspirators, and they sought to put them to death without legal trial or even investigation ..." (οἱ καὶ δεσμίους καταγαγόντες αὐτοὺς μετὰ σκυλμῶν ὡς ἀνδράποδα, μᾶλλον δὲ ὡς ἐπιβούλους, ἄνευ πάσης ἀνακρίσεως καὶ ἐξετάσεως ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνελεῖν νόμου Σκυθῶν ἀγριωτέραν ἐμπεπορημένοι ὠμότητα) (7:4–5).⁷⁷ The Jews, having been vindicated by God and by the king, rejoiced: "On that day they put to death over three hundred men and they kept it as a joyous festival" (7:15). They recovered all their possessions; God had perfectly accomplished great things in their salvation. It is interesting to note that the Jews are depicted as slaves who are treated atrociously by some of the king's friends. Placing the focus on slaves in the text allows one to observe how complex the narrative is. The text seems to operate on two levels, namely, 1) on the standpoint of powerful agents, and 2) on the position of slaves threatened and battling for survival. In the letter sent by King Ptolemy Philopator to the generals in Egypt, some of his friends, out of malice, persuaded him to put the Jews to death. The Jews, who were already being ill-treated by the powerful friends of the king, resorted to prayer in their distress, so that the one they consider the Almighty God, and who has power over all, might rescue them from the snare of death. At the other end of the spectrum is Hermon. The king treats him harshly and even his family is threatened to be

handed over to wild beasts if he does not act in accordance with the powerful monarch's commands. Hermon does not have any powerful source to protect him; he is the ultimate victim.

The slave Hermon in this narrative is depicted thus as a constantly threatened body, and one that is used as a means to accomplish the desires of powerful figures. The slave is susceptible to repeated threats of retribution and relegated to nothingness or to non-existence by his later removal from the narrative. Once the slave has played his role to advance the narrative and to show God's wisdom in preserving the lives of his people (with the corollary of the death of the perceived enemy and the enslavement of the king's traitors), the threatened body of Hermon is withdrawn from the story.

2.9 Slaves in *Pseudo-Phocylides*

The next text to consider in the process of highlighting the figure of slaves in the sapiential and philosophical writings is that of *Pseudo-Phocylides* 223–227. *Pseudo-Phocylides*, dated from around 100 B.C.E. to 100 C.E., is of Jewish authorship, although it is attributed to the well-known Greek poet Phocylides. Many scholars consider Alexandria as the most likely place for the composition of this brief treatise of moral precepts.⁷⁸ The references to slaves in this text are few. They consist of only five pithy sayings addressed to slave owners: (223) provide your slave with the tribute he owes his stomach; (224) apportion to a slave what is appointed (δούλοι τακτὰ νέμοις) so that he will be as you wish (ἵνα τοι καταθύμιος εἴη); (225) do not brand (your) slave (στίγματα μὴ γράψῃς) thus insulting him; (226) do not hurt a slave (δοῦλον μὴ βλάβῃς) by slandering (him) to (his) master; and (227) accept advice also from a judicious slave (λάμβανε καὶ βουλὴν παρὰ οἰκέτου εὖ φρονέοντος).⁷⁹

In these gnomic expressions, the author is advocating a certain balance. The owner of the slave must provide food for his slave, but only to a certain degree. The slave needs to be placed under control, so that the slave may continue to play the role of a socially constructed body—a mere commodity—acting as the master wishes. The slave owner is to impose the right amount of work (τακτὰ) on his living tool so that the slave will continue to live according to the owner's satisfaction (καταθύμιος). The mention of insult is quite interesting to note. The author estimates it is an insult to brand or mark (στίγματα) one's slave (that is, one must avoid marking the slave's body as a public spectacle denoting it as the property of a particular master),⁸⁰ but he does not seem to find any insult in a master commanding a slave to do whatever the master wishes, as that was the norm in antiquity.⁸¹

The next piece of advice to the reader is to not hurt a slave by slandering (him) (κακηγορέων) to (his) master. The issue of slander is once again present. This time, the onus is on the (free) person to be considerate to the slave. One should not insult the slave of a master because in doing so, he commits a property offense. In this sense, the notion of honour is of importance. By

insulting a master's slave, one also slanders the master. Thus, the consideration is not for the slave per se, but for the sake of their association with their owner. Slaves functioned as stock characters with the pedagogical purpose of demonstrating how one should behave to be a better master.

The last reference to slaves concerns the free person and the matter of receiving advice from a judicious slave. Again, the text's interest is in the free person. The judicious slave (οικέτου εἰς φρονέοντος) may have words of advice to offer and a free person may benefit from them. In these various words of wisdom, the slave is of no interest. Even if the text may give the impression that the author is sensitive to the plight of the slaves and that the slaves may be presented in some generous light, the focus is not on the slaves who are deemed to be property, but on the gains the master may receive.

In summary, the focus of the text is on the honour of the master and in the interest of the free person. The wisdom shared in *Pseudo-Phocylides* concerning the slaves is that they are the possessions of the free masters who need to ensure that their slaves perform well for the benefit of the free individuals in society.⁸² Since this text was addressed to representatives of the ruling class, its perspectives and moral instructions are directed at assuring that the social distributions remain hierarchically organized. The instructions concerning how master(s) should deal with their slaves constitute the last gnomic expressions uttered in the text, as if to indicate to the master(s) how dealing with their slaves is of utter importance and that they should not forget these important teachings.

The Epilogue (only three lines) is about the purification of the soul of the masters, but not the body:

228 Purifications are for the purity of the soul, not of the body (ἀγν'
εἶη ψυχῆς οὐ σώματός εἰσι καθαρμοί)
229 These are the mysteries of righteousness; living thus
230 may you live out (your) life well to the threshold of old age.

The soul then becomes, in a Foucauldian sense, a “technology of power over the body.”⁸³ The purification of the master's soul is guaranteed through the mechanism of power exercised over the socially constructed bodies of the slaves.

2.10 Slaves in *The Sentences of the Syriac Menander* 154–168; 228; 347

The collection of wisdom sayings from the Syriac Menander introduces us to a very complex understanding of what it means to be a slave. The author of the *Sentences* is unknown. Most scholars opt for a third-century C.E. dating.⁸⁴ The provenance of this work is not clear, and although a few scholars have suggested Alexandria in Egypt as the likely place for such a

composition, the discussion has not been settled.⁸⁵ The relative consensus around the language of this composition is that it was originally written in Greek.⁸⁶ Instructions on how a free member of society should interact with a slave are given in the following brief aphorisms:⁸⁷

- 154 Do not dine with a bad slave
 155 lest his master(s) accuse(s) you
 156 of teaching his (their) slave to steal.
 157 Hate a bad slave,
 158 and beware of a free man who steals;
 159 for just as you have not the competence to kill a slave
 160 neither have you (the capacity) to restrain a free man.
 161 God hates the bad slave
 162 who hates and dishonors his master(s).
 163 If you see a bad slave in deplorable misfortune,
 164 do not feel sorry for him,
 165 but say, "Alas for his master(s), what a (piece of) property."
 166 Love the industrious slave⁸⁸
 167 who is active and works with zeal in the house of his master(s).
 168 As for every bad man, God gives him into slavery,
 ...
 227 Tardily does the freeborn appreciate his home,
 228 and the maid slave the house of her master(s)
 ...
 347 Do not cast a glance at your maid slave in your house.⁸⁹

In these wisdom sayings, the slave is presented in binary categories. There are, according to this text, two types of slaves: the good and the bad.⁹⁰ The good slave is industrious (166) and is diligent in working in the house of his master (s) (167). The bad slave hates and dishonours his master(s) (162); one (free person) should not eat with such a slave (154), because, if one dines with a bad slave, one may be accused by the slave's master(s) of teaching such slaves to steal (155–156). One may wonder then whether eating with a good slave is appropriate, and whether the bad slave can only learn how to steal from a free person that he/she dines with. These lines depict God as being a specific agent in assuring the normality of the roles and the fate of the (bad) slaves. The word of wisdom to a free person is to hate a bad slave (157), and that God himself hates a bad slave (161);⁹¹ the bad slave hates and dishonours his master(s) (162). A free person should not have any pity for a bad slave in deplorable adversity; it is unfortunate for a master to have such a piece of [useless] property (165).⁹² Does that imply that a free person can befriend a good slave? The text says that a free person should be aware of another free person who steals (158) because God hands over a free person who steals into slavery (168). Eventually, a maid slave gets to appreciate the house of her

master(s) (228).⁹³ The slaves' masters should not cast a glance at their maid slaves in their houses (347). This seems to be contradicting the view of the slave as a mere piece of property (165). The text does not explain why the masters should be careful not to glance at their female slaves in the house, but one may imagine the sexual temptation.⁹⁴ The injunction to the masters not to glance at the female slaves in their house is intriguing (or out of the ordinary), but the master still owns and controls the slave. In addition, it is not clear what the author means by addressing the reader as not having "the competence to kill a slave" (159).⁹⁵ Overall, the text participates in what we have seen all along thus far: the objectification of slaves for the sake of the well-being of the free person. The perspective of the text is on what brings honour to free men of society. The expected attitude on the part of slave owners is to hate an evil slave, just as God himself hates them.

2.11 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to highlight how slaves are represented as mere bodies in these various texts, and the different social, political, and literary dynamics around the slaves in the so-called pseudepigraphic literature. I have gone through the two volumes edited by James H. Charlesworth in order to approach understanding this fascinating, but neglected subject. I readily admit that one chapter is hardly enough to do justice to all the slaves in this important corpus, and I may have overlooked some slaves or issues around slaves in this vast collection of literature. I do not, however, wish to expand much a chapter that is already quite long. I also concede that the serial order of the chapter produces some repetition in its assertions about particular issues. Other scholars may, in the future, enhance or challenge the presentations and analysis offered in this chapter. However, one important point that my study makes is that no one should ever reread these texts and continue to neglect the slaves as characters in them. Highlighting the slaves and the power dynamics around them was a way for me to problematize some conclusions or some theological positions—on a narrative level, or otherwise. For example, the discussions around whether Joseph was a slave or not in the *Testament of Joseph* may well reflect discussions that may have occurred among Christian members in the early second century C.E., who adopted and adapted this Jewish text as they were trying to define themselves in the larger Greek and Roman world. In *The Testament of Job*, the unnamed female slave at the door plays an important role in allowing us to reimagine the text. Maybe the narrative is not so much about Job's piety, but also or particularly about some of the lessons the patriarch had to continue learning on the importance of not neglecting the helpless and the slaves, and on the necessity to do good to the poor. In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the romance offers political intrigue about who is the master and who is the slave, and also how one becomes a slave (Aseneth seemed to have become a slave to Joseph willingly). The dynamics of these

different poles, as we have seen, are extremely complicated. The reversal of a group represented as slaves at the beginning of *the Letter of Aristeas* to the portrayal of how the slaves' deity and the wisdom of the philosophers-translators representing the slaves as superior to the powerful members of their host country, is simply gripping. However, the slaves are still presented as mere bodies in other texts surveyed, such as in the Wisdom and Philosophical literature.

The treatment of slaves in this particular literature is an important subject worthy of exploration. However much they have in common, these texts also exhibit specific perspectives in how they depict the relation of slave owners to slaves. The material from *Ahiqar* is quite terrifying in how an enslaved character is casually killed for the protection of an elite person so that the narrative can continue its course. Because of the death of the unnamed eunuch, the wise and successful *Ahiqar* could then continue providing necessary wisdom to the king. In 3 Maccabees, a slave and a group of slaves must be very careful in how they negotiate their lives. They face constant danger of being killed from the trickeries and caprices of those in power. It is only in the *Pseudo-Phocylides* text that one finds the injunction to the slave owners to avoid marking the slave's body as a public spectacle denoting them as the property of a particular master. What the author says is contrary to common practice in antiquity. In the *Sentences of the Syriac Menander*, slave owners are legally bound not to engage in summary torture and execution of their slaves. However, the slave owners needed to continue to place their slaves who were property under due control in order for them (i.e., the masters) to continue to live as respected members of their elite social groups.

Slaves are present as an integrated component of the cultural, economic, and religious landscape in the Wisdom and Philosophical literature. In these texts, they are used to advance the different discourses on wisdom and the discussions and understanding of how one should live and interact with others in society. The diverse experiences of slaves are not questioned in these texts that purport to share with others the benefit of wisdom; the bodies of the slaves are mostly relegated to their useful functions—their bodies being disposable, constantly threatened, socially constructed and functioning as properties, due to the lack of appreciation for their humanity. One may then problematize the very goal of these texts when one considers how slaves are represented in them. Finally, one may wonder why there is virtually no scholarship on the slaves in this particular type of literature.

In the subsequent chapters, I continue to pay close attention to slaves as characters in a variety of early Christian writings in order to propose some creative interpretative possibilities, which a reading and understanding of history "from below" particularly allows. This exercise in (re)reading is important to undertake in the process of considering an alternative historiography or new understanding of some early Jewish and early Christian texts. I now turn my attention to slaves in the Pauline corpus.

Notes

- 1 The literature on ancient slavery, especially in the last 30 to 40 years, has been expanding at an unprecedented rate. See among countless others Isaac Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949); Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Cambridge: The Vikings Press, 1980); Marie M. Mactoux, *Douleia: Esclavage et pratiques discursives dans l'Athène classique* (Paris: Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 1980); G. E. M. de Sainte Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981); S. Scott Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7:21* (SBL Dissertation Series 11; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1973); J. Vogt and H. Bellen, eds., *Bibliographie zur antiken Sklaverei*, rev. by E. Hermann and N. Brockmeyer (Bochum: N. Brockmeyer, 1983); M. A. Dandamayev, *Slavery in Babylonia: From Nabopolassar to Alexander the Great (626–331 B.C.)* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984); J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 32 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995). Reprinted in Paperback Edition, 1998; William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Roman Literature and Its Contexts; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Heather D. Baker, "Degrees of Freedom: Slavery in the Mid-First Millennium BC Babylonia," *World Archaeology* 33.1 (2001): 18–26; Page duBois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (University of Chicago Press, 2003); Idem, *Slavery: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Donald B. Redford, *From Slave to Pharaoh: the Black Experience of Ancient Egypt* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); R. Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free: The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World*. *Mnemosyne Supplement* 266 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: OUP, 2005); Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Niall McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* (London: Duckworth, 2007); Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Keith Bradley and P. A. Cartledge, *The Cambridge History of World Slavery*. Volume 1: The Ancient Mediterranean World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- 2 In some of the texts, there is very little to be found regarding slaves. I still proceed to pay attention to the incidental mention of slaves as characters in them, although there may not be much to gain with respect to my object of enquiry. In other texts where there is much more material to profit from I present a more coherent narrative analysis regarding the function of slaves in these writings. I offer some common threads and differences in how slaves are presented as characters in these various texts. Regarding method and theory, although I do not engage in showing how subaltern studies can be applied specifically to particular narratives, I am guided by the tenets of subaltern studies to probe history and narratives differently, alternatively, and "from below."
- 3 Corporality is used here in the sense of the phenomenally experienced of being a body. See Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock, "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology," in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1.1 (1987): 6–41; Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially chapter one: "What She Knew in Her Body: An Introduction."
- 4 See for example Thomas E. J. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1989); Keith Bradley, "Animalizing the slave: The truth of fiction," *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 110–125.

- 5 See among others J. J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism* (Mishoul: SBL, 1974); George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 193–196; Jean-Michel Roessli, “Les ‘Oracles Sibyllins,’” in *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne* (ed. Bernard Pouderon and Enrico Norelli; Paris: Cerf, 2013), 591–618; Susan Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha: An Introduction to the literature of the Second Temple period* (London: SPCK, 2014), 78–92.
- 6 The text used here is the one edited by J. Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 8, Leipzig, 1902. This text is accessible through the Online Critical Pseudepigrapha. The English translation is that of John J. Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments (ed. James H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 317–472.
- 7 See Karin B. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul’s Declaration “Neither Jew Nor Greek, Neither Slave Nor Free, Nor Male and Female” in the Context of First Century Thought* (London: T&T Clark, 2015).
- 8 Book 3 is of Jewish origin. The majority of scholars agree that Jews in Egypt probably composed it. It is one of the earliest sibylline oracles (mid-second century B.C.E. for most of its part), and the longest. See Nickelsburg, 194; Docherty, 82; J. J. Collins, *OTP*, 354–356. For a thorough treatment of Book 3 and its social setting, see Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and its Social Setting: With an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003). Buitenwerf is one of the few scholars arguing for an Asia Minor provenance of this collection. I side with the majority opinion for an Egyptian source.
- 9 The oracles against various nations constitute one of the principal stages of book 3 (350–488). See Collins, *OTP*, 354.
- 10 Rome’s fall and rise, but also harmony and friendship, are within the purview of the sibyl’s visions (361, 375).
- 11 In Greek mythology, Cronos (the son of Heaven and Earth—Uranus and Gaea) swallowed his own children as soon as they were born because his parents had warned him that he was destined to be overpowered by a child of his. Cronos, however, was not able to swallow one of his children because his wife (Rhea) hid the baby Zeus and gave the father a stone instead, wrapped in clothes in the shape of a baby. Zeus grew up and was able to overthrow his father, who had to disgorge his children (Hestia, Demeter, Hera and Hades). Cronos was subsequently exiled (according to one version of the myth), or he became a slave (based on another version). Cronos’ children battled continually with one another for supremacy. See Hesiod, *Theogony: Works and Days Testimonia* (ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most; Cambridge, Mass.: LCL, 2009), especially 39–55 (453–638). It is probably based on this myth that the sibyl here characterizes Cronos’ descendants as “bastards” and as “slaves.” Alexander and his descendants may be identified as such. See Sib. 3.390; 11.198, which refers to “a bastard of the son of Cronos,” who “will lay waste the cities of many articulate men”; and Sib. 11.216.
- 12 I hesitate to articulate a clear answer to the question, although it seems that the sibyl is engaging in a polemical discourse by castigating some tyrannical figures into the categories of savages, equating being a slave to being a savage.
- 13 The power of the imagination as a form of resistance against empire, as displayed in many early Jewish apocalyptic writings, is well captured by Anatheia E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011).
- 14 Sibyllines 4 and 5 are about the tumultuous political and social upheavals in and around Jerusalem between 70 and 132 C.E. *Sib. Or.* 4.115 refers to the fall of

- Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. The theological cause of the destruction, in the sibyl's view, is the people's trust in folly and the abandonment of piety, which has as its corollaries all kinds of social unrests and crimes, committed even in front of the Temple. The fleeing king seems to be a reference to Nero. See also a similar reference to an analogous figure in 5.140–44: "He will flee from Babylon, a terrible and shameless prince whom all mortals and noble men despise" (144).
- 15 The translation adopted for the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* is that of Howard C. Kee, *OTP*, Vol. 1, 782–828.
 - 16 I use "habitus" in the sense Pierre Bourdieu uses it, although I am aware the notion is much more complex than I can do justice to here. Bourdieu defines the concept as a "system of structuring dispositions" that allows us to make sense of human bodies as "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and forgotten as history." For Bourdieu, "The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them." See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52, 86, 53. Throughout the narrative Joseph is presented as one who, *par excellence*, possesses self-control, which was a character trait believed to be possessed only by a free individual. It is possible that the narrative is using this ancient stock psychology to make the point that Joseph's self-control (σωφροσύνη), and his overall attitudes in his dealings and interactions with others, were not slave-like, in the sense of not conforming to stereotypical stock psychology that attributed childlike and simple traits to enslaved persons. J. Albert Harrill is right when he states, "The stock figures are products of the literary artifice that ancient slave holders created by stereotyping their slaves. Ancient slaveholders imagined, or, rather, preferred to imagine in literature that their slaves behaved only within the limits of the bland moralistic polarities of "good" and "bad." See J. Albert Harrill, "The Psychology of Slaves in the Gospel Parables: A Case Study in Social History," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 55 (2011): 63–74.
 - 17 The Egyptian woman is very present in the first section of the narrative (3.1–9.5). She torments Joseph continually to have sex with her but Joseph is depicted as the struggling, although altogether virtuous, hero who resists her temptations. The second section of the *Testament of Joseph* is about the issue of slavery related to Joseph (11.2–16.6). The two sections are not well connected or well organized, and one may conjecture with Hollander and De Jonge that "the author of the Testaments has incorporated the information given in this story in T.Jos. from a source which differed in many respects from that used in the first part of T.Jos." See H. W. Hollander and M. De Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 393; William Loader, *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in the Writings of Philo and Josephus and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 421–425. In the other testaments, Joseph is presented as the idealized, pious, kind, possessing self-control, and compassionate man the children of the patriarchs need to emulate (e.g., *T. Benj.* 3.1; *T. Sim.* 4.4–6; *T. Reu.* 4.8–10; *T. Zeb.* 8.4; *T. Jos.* 10.2).
 - 18 On Joseph's lying to cover up for his brothers' actions see Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 168–170.

- 19 A slave responded with his body; physical punishment was taken for granted for a slave. See Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially chapter 3, "Embodying Slavery from Paul to Augustine."
- 20 A freeborn is supposed to be free and attended by slaves, whereas a slave is supposed to be beaten, put in jail, or serve in his/her capacity as a mere body/a piece of property available to please the master.
- 21 I translate the text thus instead of adopting Kee's translation "and my Lord caused them to be my servants."
- 22 I engage in this brief reflection from the point of view of the moment of retrospective significance, as developed by Trouillot. I do that in order to tease out how the trope of slavery in such a narrative could play certain roles in the discourse production of some early Christ-groups in their processes of defining themselves vis-à-vis other groups.
- 23 One needs, however, as Rob Kugler has reminded us, to consider the text within its broader theological matrix and read it by being sensitive to the subtle influences and nuances the Hebrew Scriptures might have had on it. See Rob Kugler, "Writing Scripturally in the Testament of Job: Advancing Our Notions of Scripture and Authority in Judean Literature of the Early Roman Era," in *Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity* (eds., Isaac Kalimi, Tobias Nicklas and Geza G. Xeravits; Göttingen: Gruyter, 2013), 251–259.
- 24 See Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, 100–108.
- 25 For an argument situating the production of the text within Roman Egypt in the early to mid-second century, see William 'Chip' Gruen, III, "Seeking a Context for the *Testament of Job*," *JSP* 18.3 (2009): 163–179.
- 26 I translate this by keeping the upper case in the name of God. All the other translations are taken from R. P. Spittler, "Testament of Job," in the *OTP*, 829–868.
- 27 George W. E. Nickelsburg is reading too much theology in the text when he states, "The burnt loaf that Job offers Satan is symbolic of Job's refusal henceforth to participate in the cult, of which the offering of bread seems to have been a part, and it may also imply Job's burning of the temple." See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 317.
- 28 Slaves in antiquity were judged as lacking the ability to behave of their own will; they were supposed to act according to the directives, or to mirror the desires, of their owners.
- 29 Stating that I do understand a major theme of the text to be Job's contest against Satan. It is a theme that has its resolution in Satan declaring defeat in the face of Job's endurance/perseverance (27.4). Job declares to his children that he has exhibited perseverance in everything (1.5: ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ γενόμενος). See Cees Haas, "Job's Perseverance in the Testament of Job," in *Studies on the Testament of Job* (ed. Michael A. Knibb and Pieter W. van der Horst; SNTSMS 666; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 117–154.
- 30 Michael C. Legaspi tries to capture the image of Sitis in his "Job's Wives in the *Testament of Job*: A note on the synthesis of Two Traditions," *JBL* 127.1 (2008): 71–79. However, his presentation of the heroine is too scant; it needed to be developed to capture some of the nuance her character embodies. Legaspi recognizes that Sitis "begged and labored as a slave for many years in order to provide bread for Job and herself" (76), and that "Sitis grew exhausted, sold her hair to Satan in exchange for bread," but it is too simplistic on Legaspi's part to assume it is for being "misled by Satan she told Job to give up his struggle" (77). One can observe in the text how she despairs over her husband's misery and how she loves

- him dearly by toiling to give him bread to eat daily. It is being lured into Job's rhetoric in the narrative for a reader to conclude that it is Satan who has delivered the following words to her: "Speak a work against the Lord and die. Then I too shall be freed from weariness that issues from the pain of your body" (25.10). Peter W. van der Horst captures Sitis' graciousness well in the following excerpt: "With never-failing loyalty and sincere love she exerts herself to the utmost on behalf of her husband. She undergoes the greatest possible humiliation, i.e. having her head shorn, rather than letting him go hungry. Also her great care to have the bones of her children buried is a testimony that she lives up to the standards of Israel's piety. It is, therefore, not without reason that both men and animals burst into lament when this noble woman is found dead." See Pieter W. van der Horst, "Images of Women in the Testament of Job," in *Studies on the Testament of Job*, 99.
- 31 Ibid., 97.
 - 32 It is not clear whether she committed suicide or not.
 - 33 See Keith Bradley, "Animalizing the slave: The truth of fiction," *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 110–125. Aristotle associates slaves with animals in their physical work (*Politics*, 1254b: "And also the usefulness of slaves diverges little from that of animals; bodily service for the necessities of life is forthcoming from both, from slaves and from domestic animals alike").
 - 34 I take the wording "wretched of the earth" from the English translation of Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre*, *The Wretched of the earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1961).
 - 35 See R. P. Spittler, "Testament of Job," *OTP*, Vol. 1, note 1, 860.
 - 36 On the historical problems related to this narrative, see Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)* (New York, for the Dropsie College of Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1961).
 - 37 See the discussions and various positions in Elias Bickerman, "Zur Datierung des Pseudo-Aristeas," *ZNW* 29 (1930): 280–296; André Pelletier, *Lettre d'Aristée à Philocrate* (SC 89; Paris: Cerf, 1962), 57–58; R. J. H. Shutt, "Letter of Aristeas," *OTP*, Vol. 2, 8–9; Sylvie Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2003), 128–130.
 - 38 John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E.-117 C.E.)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 148; Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 109.
 - 39 The issue of translation plays a minor role in the narrative; it fades in the background as the narrative expands on how the king was interested in quizzing the translators in a series of symposia (187–300).
 - 40 The translation used is that of R. J. H. Shutt in the *OTP*, Vol. 2, 12–34; the Greek text is from H. St. J. Thackeray, "Appendix: The Letter of Aristeas," in H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 531–606. For a discussion on Jewish slavery in antiquity see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: OUP, 2005). In this monograph, Hezser analyzes the status of slaves within ancient Jewish society and the position of slaves within Jewish families and households.
 - 41 See Sylvie Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*, 53–63. On the argument about the influence of Exodus in *Aristeas*, see also Arkady Kovelman, *Between Alexandria and Jerusalem: The Dynamic of Jewish and Hellenistic Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), especially chapter 3.
 - 42 See Ronald Charles, "Hybridity and the Letter of Aristeas," *JSJ* 40 (2009): 242–259. Sylvie Honigman considers the Letter as a "charter myth" (*The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria*, 38–41), while Benjamin G. Wright III considers

- that the overall purpose of the book is “to articulate a myth of origins for the LXX.” See B. G. Wright III, *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction: Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 280.
- 43 See V. Tcherikover, “The Ideology of the Letter of Aristeas,” *HTR* 51 (1958): 59–85; M. A. L. Beavis, “Anti-Egyptian Polemic in the Letter of Aristeas 130–165 (The High Priest’s Discourse),” *JSJ* 18 (1987): 145–151.
 - 44 See Wright, *Praise Israel*, 280.
 - 45 See R. Charles, “Hybridity.”
 - 46 See John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*. CBQ Monograph Series 18 (Washington DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987); Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).
 - 47 See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 69–74. According to O. S. Wintermute, “the author of Jubilees belonged to the Hasidic or Essene branch of Judaism.” See James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 45.
 - 48 See Todd R. Hanneken, *The Subversion of the Apocalypses in the Book of Jubilees*, Early Judaism and Its Literature 34 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012).
 - 49 See the Ethiopic text in R. H. Charles, *The Ethiopic Version of the Hebrew Book of Jubilees* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1895).
 - 50 Susan Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, 15.
 - 51 O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees,” in *OTP*, Vol. II, 69. For issues of redaction, ideology and theology in *Jubilees*, see Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (JSJS 117; Leiden: Brill, 2007); see also James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Guide to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).
 - 52 In his 1989 edition/translation, James C. VanderKam rendered the expression “an abject slave” and commented, following R. H. Charles, that the formulation in the Ethiopic text seemed more in line with the reading reflected in LXX Old Latin Eth Genesis and the targums: they may presuppose ‘oved ‘eved (or ‘eved ‘oved). See VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text*. 2 vols. CSCO 510–511 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), vol. 2, note 45. One could also regard the reading as an interpretation of a Hebrew idiom that is meant to emphasize the servile status Canaan would occupy. One may certainly doubt *Jubilees* has made a change to the text and see that what the translators are trying to do is to bring out the meaning of the idiom. Incidentally, on the trope of slavery in *Jubilees*, one may refer to Jub 11:2, where trade in slaves is a characteristic of the devolution in society during the time between the Tower of Babel and the birth of Abram.
 - 53 See C. Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II (2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–1985), 181, 187; J. J. Collins, “Joseph and Aseneth: Jewish or Christian?” *JSP* 14.2 (2005): 97–112. Collins, among others, has argued that the narrative is a Jewish tale with particular concern about intermarriage between a Jew and a non-Jew. The text is usually dated in the first century C.E. (no later than 200), although situated as early as the second century B.C.E. as well. See Randall D. Chesnutt, “From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*. Supplement Series 16 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 85; Edith M. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas*. JSPSup, 17 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 33; Ross S. Kraemer, *When Joseph met Aseneth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 286–288; Chesnutt

- (1995, 20–93); and Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 17–79. Hicks-Keeton moves away, rightly, from any clear demarcation between “Judaism” and “Christianity” in relationship to this narrative to argue that this text is a boundary-negotiation and a boundary-crossing tale. See also Jill Hicks-Keeton, “Aseneth between Judaism and Christianity: Reframing the Debate,” *JSJ* 49 (2018): 189–122.
- 54 See Moyer Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought*. SNTSMS 119 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 56.
- 55 See C. Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, 195; Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), 151. For a recent survey on studies done on *Joseph and Aseneth*, see Angela Standhartinger, “Recent Scholarship on *Joseph and Aseneth* (1988–2013),” *Currents in Biblical Research* 12 (2014): 353–406.
- 56 See C. Burfeing and U. B. Fink, *Joseph und Aseneth kritisch herausgegeben* (PVTG, 5; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003); C. Burchard, “The text of Joseph and Aseneth reconsidered,” *JSP* 14 (2005): 83–96. The longer version is the one used here and the translation is from C. Burchard, *OTP*, Vol. II, 202–247.
- 57 It is also interesting to notice quickly that there is a woman slave working as the gatekeeper living or lying down close to Aseneth's room. As the heroine was about to go down from the upper floor to the gateway and gather ashes to mourn in repentance in order for her to become religiously suitable to Joseph, she passes by this slave gatekeeper who was asleep with her children. It is not clear why this particular slave is mentioned. C. Burchard's explanation of this aside is: “Women as gatekeepers, in the author's day, were most likely slaves who lived in a room near the gate or door ... Why the children should be mentioned is not clear, unless to indicate that the woman had retired for the night (Lk 11:7) and was not likely to notice Aseneth's doings.” See Burchard, *OTP*, Vol. II, 215.
- 58 Conquering this house, the priest and the princess Aseneth, seems to be a miniature representation of the eventual conquest of the house of Pharaoh, his priests and the princes of Egypt.
- 59 See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 15.
- 60 Foucault's framework of power as relational is very relevant here. Foucault contends, “Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads [...] Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.” See M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977* (ed. Colin Gordon; London: Harvester Press, 1980), 98.
- 61 Certainly, the presentation of Aseneth as a slave needs to be nuanced. In her relationship to Joseph, she states she is his slave and acts as such. However, from the rest of the tale we know she is not a slave, nor does she act as one in her relationship to others. She does not act like the mother of Joseph's brothers, nor does she act like the slave women in her house. She is employed in a metaphorical way as a slave in the narrative in her relationship to Joseph to accomplish certain authorly ideological goals.
- 62 R. Charles, “A Postcolonial reading of *Joseph and Aseneth*,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 18.4 (2009): 270, note 20.
- 63 The references to the text therein are from J. M. Lindenberg, “Ahiqar,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth, vol. II; London: Doubleday,

- 1985), 494–507. See also Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* (Baltimore and London, 1983). The first edition of *Ahiqar* was by A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1923). A new reconstruction of the *Ahiqar* text with translation but without commentary may be found in Bezael Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, *Literature, Accounts, Lists* (Texts and Studies for Students; Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1993). For a good overview of recent scholarship on *Ahiqar*, see Seth A. Bledsoe, “Can Ahiqar tell us Anything about Personified Wisdom?” *JBL* 132.1 (2013): 119–137.
- 64 See the discussion on the name in Lindenberger, “Ahiqar,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 483.
- 65 See Sakkie Cornelius, “‘Eunuchs’? The Ancient Background of Eunouchos in the Septuagint,” in *Septuagint and Reception* (VTS 127) (ed. J. Cook; Brill: Leiden, 2009), 321–333.
- 66 In longer, and later, versions of the text (Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Slavonic, Turkish), the officer in charge of killing Ahiqar informs the Assyrian king that Ahiqar is, in fact, still alive. The king is delighted to learn this unexpected news, since he needed to have the wisdom of a great and experienced advisor who could resolve some very challenging riddles the king of Egypt sent to him upon hearing about the supposed death of Ahiqar. The failure to solve these riddles would mean that the Assyrian king would have to pay the Egyptian ruler a tax for three years. Ahiqar was then sent to Egypt where he gave solutions to the different challenging riddles proposed to him. When the wise and successful Ahiqar returned to Assyria, he requested that he might be able to discipline his treacherous nephew/adopted son. Ahiqar reproaches and chastises the traitor—Nadin is put in chains and beaten—by reciting to him a long series of fables. This episode ends with the death of Nadin. See F. C. Conybeare, J. R. Harris and A. S. Lewis, *The Story of Ahiqar: From the Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Armenia, Ethiopic, Old Turkish, Greek and Slavonic Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913). See also Christopher B. Hays, *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster Jon Knox Press, 2014), 100–104. His translation of the Syriac version of Ahiqar is adapted from F. C. Conybeare et al.
- 67 Porten and Yardeni’s translation is: “178. A stroke for a slave-lad, a rebuke for a slave-lass; moreover, for all your slaves discipline. 179. He who acquires a fugitive/licentious slave (or) a thievish/stolen handmaiden ... [... makes] 180. the name of his father and his descendants into the name of foulness.”
- 68 Lindenberger’s comment on this saying is: “The good name of one’s household is jeopardized by bringing into it slaves of bad character.” See Lindenberger, 1983, 55.
- 69 One is reminded of the colorful narratives like the *Apocryphal Acts of Andrew* and the pagan *Leucippe* and *Clitophon* of Achilles Tatius. One may refer to Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), especially chapter 4, where there are parallels.
- 70 Walter Johnson, “On Agency,” *Journal of Social History* 37.1 (2003): 114.
- 71 Jennifer Glancy, “Resistance and Humanity in Roman Slavery,” *Biblical Interpretation* 21–4–5 (2013): 502.
- 72 See Sara Johnson, “Third Maccabees: Historical Fictions and the Shaping of Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Period,” in *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (eds. Jo-Ann Brant, C. W. Herdick and C. Shea; Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 185–197, and Idem, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish*

- Identity: Third Maccabees in Its Cultural Context* (Hellenistic Culture and Society; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), chapter 5, "Historicity and Historical Ambivalence."
- 73 See Moses Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* (Jewish Apocryphal Literature 3; New York: Harper, 1953), 22; Noah Hacham, "3 Maccabees: An Anti-Dionysian Polemic," in *Ancient Fiction*, 167.
- 74 See Sara R. Johnson, *Historical Fictions*, 170; Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 225–226.
- 75 For example, "Slaves and freedmen were to be found at all levels of the developing imperial bureaucracy in Rome and the provinces, from lowly clerical workers to influential administrators. Until the reign of Domitian, freedmen headed all the great Palatine bureau; even after those posts were reserved instead for equestrians, a few imperial freedmen who had been raised to equestrian status reached the top of the administrative ladder." See Keith Bradley and P. A. Cartledge, *The Cambridge History of World Slavery*, Volume 1, 282.
- 76 I use here the translation of H. Anderson, "3 Maccabees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth, vol. II; London: Doubleday, 1985), 517–529.
- 77 Emphasis added.
- 78 See M. Gilbert, "Wisdom Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (ed. Michael E. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 313–316; Pascale Derron, ed., *Les Sentences du Pseudo-Phocylides: texte, traduction, commentaire* (Collection des Universités de France; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986); Pieter W. van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. II (London: Doubleday, 1985), 565–582. This is the work I use here to make my brief comments. See also Pieter van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides Revisited," *JSP* 3 (1988): 3–30; and Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2005), 13. W. T. Wilson refers to the text as a "gnomic poem" because it exhibits a number of features associated with moral teachings suitable for pedagogical settings. For Wilson, "Besides their brevity, gnomic sayings were valuable for encyclical instruction on account of their traditional nature, which lent them an air of authority, as well as their thematic range, which offered students perspectives on various issues relevant to their general education." See Wilson, *The Sentences*, 10, 11–12.
- 79 The Greek text used is Young's critical edition. See D. Young, *Theognis, Ps.-Pythagoras, Ps. Phocylides, Chares, Anonymi aulodia, fragmentum teleiambicum*. Bibliotheca Script. Graec. et Rom. Teubneriana. 2nd ed. (Leipzig: BSB Teubner, 1971). The English translation is that of Pieter W. van der Horst, Charlesworth II, 574–582. To situate these verses in a larger literary context see Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences*, 211–213.
- 80 What the author says here is contrary to common practice in antiquity, and on that basis, one may be tempted to conclude that he may be more humane than other contemporary thinkers. In *Pseudo-Phocylides*, the author does indeed seem to have regard for the slave as a person, as someone who should be fed appropriately and even as someone to whom one should listen for advice. However, there are also other, and less favorable, ways to interpret the position of the master(s) towards the slave(s) as evidenced in the analysis undertaken therein.
- 81 Slaves were susceptible to be disposed of and moved as their masters wished. They were, in the Greek and Roman world, legally considered the mere property of their masters, who controlled them and could use them as their sexual toys. See, in particular, Page duBois, *Slaves and Other Objects*; Keith Bradley, *Slaves and*

- Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 26–45; Henrik Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 13–14; Jane F. Gardner, “Slavery and Roman Law,” in Keith Bradley and P. A. Cartledge, *The Cambridge History of World Slavery*, Volume 1, 414–437.
- 82 My conclusion is in line with W. T. Wilson’s when he states, “The discourse of the *Sentences*, then, constructs social space in terms of various conventional hierarchies. Moreover, it encourages its readers to align themselves with the vantage point of those who occupy positions of power and authority within (almost all of) these hierarchies and to discern their moral obligations accordingly.” See Wilson, *The Sentences*, 35.
- 83 See Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated from the French by Alan Sheridan, 1977 (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 29.
- 84 See T. Baarda, trans. and intr., “The *Sentences* of the Syriac Menander (Third Century A.D.),” in Charlesworth, vol. II, 583–606.
- 85 For the Alexandrian proposition, see Jean Paul Audet, “La Sagesse de Ménandre l’Égyptien,” *RB* 59 (1952): 55–81. Contrary arguments to such a view can be found in Max Küchler, *Frühjüdische Weisheitstraditionen. Zum Fortgang weisheitlichen Denkens im Bereich des frühjüdischen Jahweglaubens* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 26; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1979), 316; and T. Baarda in Charlesworth, vol. II, 585. For discussions about the different propositions, see J. Cornelis de Vos, “The Decalogue in Pseudo-Phocylides and Syriac Menander. ‘Unwritten Laws’ or Decalogue Reception?” in *The Decalogue and Its Cultural Influence* (ed., Dominik Markl; Hebrew Bible Monographs 58; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 52–54.
- 86 See Baarda, 584. For a recent treatment of the *Sentences*, see David G. Monaco, *Sentences of the Syriac Menander: Introduction, Text and Translation, and Commentary* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2013). D. G. Monaco argues from a number of perspectives in pages 26–35, particularly transmission history and calligraphy, that the text is originally Syriac and that it originates in the region of Edessa.
- 87 The translation provided here is that of T. Baarda in Charlesworth, vol. II, 591–606. Baarda’s translation was taken from the transcription and the work of J. P. Audet (1952) and F. Schulthess, “Die Sprüche des Menanders,” *ZAW* 32 (1912): 199–224. David G. Monaco’s recent translation, which does make a difference in a variety of places, is the only one done from the manuscript directly since J. P. N. Land’s *Anecdota Syriaca I* in the nineteenth century (Leiden, 1862). Given that I am using Charlesworth for the other texts, it makes sense to use Baarda’s translation in Charlesworth here as well.
- 88 Chris L. De Wet rightly observes, “Love was an important discourse in ancient slaveholding. The best and most obedient slaves were said to love their masters—it is ‘love’ that governs the perfect slaveholding relationship [...] One needs to be suspicious of the discourse of love between slaves and slaveholders in antiquity—in most cases love was utilized as a technology to optimize labor and productivity among slaves. It was also used as a strategy to ameliorate the negative perception of punishment—slaves, like children, are punished out of love.” See Chris L. De Wet, *The Unbound God: Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 57–58.
- 89 David G. Monaco’s very clear translations of these logia are worth reproducing: “(154–156) Do not eat food with an evil slave, lest his masters lay (a charge) against you that you teach their slave to steal. (157–160) Hate an evil slave and repudiate the freedman who steals, because just as you have no power to kill a

slave, so too, (you have no power) to confine a freedman. (161–162) God hates an evil slave who hates and dishonors his masters. (163–165) If you see an evil slave (overcome) in his wretched wickedness, do not feel sorry for him. Rather, ‘Woe to his masters! What did they buy here?!’ (166–168) Love an industrious slave who is active and industrious among his masters. God gives (over) every evil man to slavery, and he esteems every industrious man worthy to arise to honor and greatness. (227–228) Slowly the freedman honors his house, and the one who is a maidservant (honors) the house of her master. (347) Do not leer at your maidservant in your house.” See D. G. Monaco, *Sentences*, 135–175. Monaco covers parallels between the slave material and the Hebrew Bible tradition particularly, but also other materials, such as a citation from the Armenian *Ahiqar* recension B, logion 45 in relation to logion 161. This recension, which was also noted by T. Baarda in relation to this particular verse, reads: “son, a slave who sins against his master, and proceeds into a strange land, let him find no rest nor any mercy from God.” See T. Baarda, 596. Cf. the translation in Conybeare et al., 61, quoted in Monaco, *Sentences*, 137.

- 90 For discussions on these two stock types in moral exemplum literature of the Roman era see James A. Harrill, “The Psychology of Slaves in the Gospel Parables: A Case Study in Social History,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 55 (2011): 63–74; Idem “Paul and Empire: Studying Roman Identity after the Cultural Turn,” *Early Christianity* 2 (2011): 281–311, especially pp. 301ff; idem, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Fortress Press, 2006), chapter 4.
- 91 God is portrayed as the agent who gives (over) every “evil” person to slavery, making thus the enslaved person responsible for his/her fate due to his or her “evil.”
- 92 Monaco remarks: “In this logion, there is not only a total lack of mercy for a slave, but the final phrase of pity on those who own such a slave, obviously views a slave as nothing but another person’s property.” Monaco, *Sentences*, 137.
- 93 This particular passage is quite difficult to interpret. Monaco is one of the few commentators—Schulthess (1912) and Audet (1952), being the only commentators before him who had anything to say about this passage—who have endeavored to comment sensitively and expertly on this logion. See here his translation of 227–228 and an excerpt from his commentary: “The first portion of the logion is somewhat enigmatic, while the latter part does makes [sic] some sense when one considers that the home of her master is not her own, and that she is, essentially, considered to be part of her master’s property. On the other hand, why the freedman should not honor his own is not so clear. One can understand why a later scribe would have altered the passage so that it would more logically read, given the fact that the freedman was a former slave, and particularly if he were only recently given his liberty, ‘slowly the freedman honors his house, and the one who is a maidservant (honors) the house of her master.’”
- 94 Ben Sira 9:5 is a text close to this logion: “Do not look too intently at a virgin, or you may find yourself forced to pay a bride price.” However, in Ben Sira the passage does not specify whether the virgin was the (open) body of a (young) female slave or the daughter/sister of a free male member of society. The price of gazing at or of being overly attentive to the female body of a (free) virgin is to be forced to marry her by paying a bride price. Ben Sira 41:19–22 has parallel sayings to the logion in *Pseudo-Phocylides* that are of interest to us: “19. Before your neighbors, be ashamed of theft. Be ashamed of breaking a promise, of leaning on the dinner table with your elbows, of stinginess when you are asked for something, 20 of not returning a greeting, of staring at a prostitute, 21 of turning down a relative’s request, of depriving someone of what is rightly his, of staring at another man’s

wife, 22 of playing around with his slave woman (keep away from her bed!) of insulting your friends, of following up your gifts with criticism.” This passage in Ben Sira is about behaviours a respectable person should not be found displaying. Honour and shame should always be taken in consideration in one’s dealings with others, and whatever conduct deemed to be socially shameful should be avoided, especially before one’s neighbors. Shame, in this sense, is the condition of losing one’s social recognition and self-(re)presentation. Although referring to not glancing at a slave woman or meddling in sexual activities with her, the passage in Ben Sira refers to another person’s slave and thus connected to a man’s property (that is, related to “what is rightly his,” 41.22).

- 95 The issue of lack of competence to kill a slave is covered in Monaco from the standpoint of dating the underlying text and how it relates to the Antonine emperors and the change in Roman law that outlawed the arbitrary torture and the summary execution of slaves without due judicial processes. For Monaco, this is evidence that “the original text of *The Sentences of the Syriac Menander* comes from the time of the Roman Empire, which gives us a terminus post quem (IV.1) ‘because just as you have no power to kill a slave, so too, you have no power) to confine a freedman’.” See Monaco, *Sentences*, 25–26. I thank Professor Monaco for making the needed pages of his work available to me when our library system could not locate his monograph anywhere in Canada, where I am doing my research.

SLAVES IN PAUL

This chapter focuses on three references to slaves in the Pauline literature: 1) Chloe's slaves in 1 Corinthians 1:11, 2) the (former) slave Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25–30, and 3) the slave Onesimus in Philemon.¹ My analysis has three aims. First, it seeks to uncover the narratives within and behind these texts from the perspectives of the slaves. Second, it highlights the voices, the echoes, and the silencing of the slaves in these texts. Third, it argues that Paul's rhetorical language in the passages under consideration attempts to establish his own hierarchical position. In the introduction to this book, I have presented the theoretical orientation that guides this project. This chapter illustrates what subaltern studies, and *inter alia*, postcolonial studies can offer. My purpose therein is to un-silence the past, or to highlight a different past by way of this particular reading focus. I intend to highlight various slaves in relation to Paul in order to reimagine their contextual particularities in some early Christ-groups. They are my central focus, and not Paul. In the first half of this chapter, I suggest that those belonging to or associated with Chloe may have pushed Paul to address the situation of the slaves directly when they went to see him. However, Paul did not do much regarding their social situation in the assemblies, aside from offering them some theological consolation. In the case of Epaphroditus, which I discuss in the second half of the chapter, he is presented as a body in motion bound to the service of others. The last character I highlight in relation to Paul is Onesimus. I argue that Paul's convincing rhetoric in sending the slave back to his master is not concerned with the slave but, rather, with the masters (the Lord, Paul, and Philemon). I suggest, following the lead of Matthew Johnson in *Onesimus Our Brother*,² that Onesimus' silence may be interpreted, in a theological sense, as evocative of God's silence and solidarity with the marginalized and the oppressed, while I also admit, as a social/subaltern historian, that it is important to move beyond the theological to study the social forces that have enforced Onesimus' silence.

3.1 Slaves in 1 Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians the reference to slavery appears five times (7:21, 22, 23; 9:19; 12:13). It is evident that some people from this assembly were slaveholders

(1:11; 1:16).³ The assembly of those “in Christ” in Corinth was composed of slaves, freedpersons, and a few with some wealth (1 Cor 1:26).⁴ The socially stratified groups addressed by Paul in this correspondence comprised relatively recent immigrants, slave holders, slaves, freed slaves, and poor artisans working in trade and service. All of these groups had been uprooted, displaced, and in search of a place to call “home” in the bustling seaport and commercial center Corinth was in the ancient Mediterranean society. This characterization of being “deracinated” and having one’s identity in flux applies to Paul as well.⁵ People belonging to others as commodities seems to have been understood as commonplace based on the text (7:23a). Although the topic of slavery in Paul’s letters has been studied before,⁶ the exploration of how slaves themselves in the *ekklēsia* in Corinth might have perceived their social space and how they might have understood Paul’s address to slaves needs further investigation.⁷ My specific interest is on “those of Chloe” (τῶν Χλόης),⁸ who reported to Paul that there were quarrels (σχίσματα) among the members in this Christ assembly at Corinth (1 Cor 1:11). I take “Chloe’s people” as a reference to those belonging to Chloe’s household (slaves, dependent workers, and possibly some freedpersons who continued to render services to her). For my analysis therein, I emphasize the slave status. We cannot know with absolute certainty whether “those of Chloe” were slaves, people associated with her as clients, or members of Chloe’s faction. However, regardless of their actual status, they raise questions about slavery that are important to explore.⁹ A number of important research questions will be explored. Did “those of Chloe” go to Paul on their own volition? Did a slaveholding mistress named Chloe send them? What would it mean to be a slave in this assembly whilst hearing and observing events, and navigating membership of the different factions vying for influence? How would they understand Paul’s theologizing about God’s calling, about being a slave or free? I will first situate the topic of slavery as it relates to 1 Corinthians in order to analyze the functions of slaves in this particular community. That will allow me to develop a “social imagination” of who Chloe’s people might have been, and to reread some of the narratives in 1 Corinthians constructed from the slaves’ perspectives.¹⁰ In the case of highlighting the slaves in the *ekklēsia* in Corinth,¹¹ this social imagination enables the reader to read and understand the interplay between the individuals (“those of Chloe,” Paul, and others) and the social positions, divisions, contradictions, and (mis)appropriations that characterized the relationship between the variegated social groups. This kind of imagination aims to pay closer attention to marginalized figures in the text and consider what we might learn anew from the record (constructed text).

Those of Chloe are both observing and participating in the happenings within this assembly. They observe the various factions competing for power and honour and they are part of a group, willingly or not. In a society with an entrenched group of elites vying for power, they are propelled to become part of the imbroglio. Competition between slaves probably existed, as each

group might have tried to align itself with a particular master and to protect the interests of one's master. There is the aspect of self-interest at play as well since the self-interest of a slave was inherently tied to the master.¹²

Paul mentions diverse dissenting groups, by referring to those saying: "I am of Paul/I am of Paul's group/I belong to the Pauline faction" (Εγὼ εἰμι Παύλου), or "I associate with or I belong to Apollos" (Εγὼ Ἀπολλῶ); "I am with Cephas" (Εγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ), or "I am of Christ's party" (Εγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ) (1 Cor 1:12).¹³ One may imagine that there were other factions declaring their allegiances as well.¹⁴ The oral information Paul receives from "those of Chloe" is from one of the parties involved in the conflicts trying to align Paul to take their side or trying to explain the divisions from the perspective of their party. The rivalries and the kind of issues present in the Corinthian *ekklēsia* are characteristically found in ancient associations.¹⁵ In other words, one may read the report coming from those of Chloe as the voice of one party in an assembly composed of numerous voices, giving rise to power struggles and negotiations, or as the viewpoint of one group that is itself imbricated in the messiness of the situation in Corinth. One may also read the factions not simply, or necessarily, from a theological perspective, but from the social and economic perspectives of slaves, and of former slaves attaching themselves as clients to teachers they view as masters or patrons.¹⁶ In this sense, the voices one hears in the report from Chloe's people belongs to certain slaves who were becoming disturbed by the different claims of slaves and of former slaves made about certain masters, and how some powerful slave-holding voices may have situated themselves within this community.

The social and economic complexity of this assembly makes it apparent that "those of Chloe" may have not only been part of a specific faction, but they may have also been vulnerable to abuse and beatings.¹⁷ Being a mere property in a community where some members had zero regard for anything done to the body as having any spiritual significance—hence the slogan: "All things are permitted/are allowed for me" (Πάντα ἔξεστιν μοι, 1 Cor 6:12)—would have placed the slaves in a delicate situation.¹⁸ Those belonging to Chloe would probably have been exposed to various impositions on their bodies, possibly by other members of this community.¹⁹ Those of Chloe may have found it difficult, if not impossible, to keep their bodies sexually impenetrable, since they lack the power to control the purity of their own bodies.²⁰ As things for sale, τῶν Χλόης, and those like them in the *ekklēsia*, would have been constantly susceptible to be moved to a different household, under the orders of a different master or mistress. In the case of the *ekklēsia* in Corinth, they could be bought, sold, and resold to others, even to members of the same assembly.²¹ Hence, the difficulty that would have posed for a slave to take sides, or the emotional/psychological trauma that could have resulted for a slave to being forced to align himself or herself to a definite group. The danger of changing hands was real, and so was the vulnerability of the slave in his or her allegiance and commitment.²²

The *ekklēsia* could have been composed of a majority of freedmen and freedwomen. Freedpersons constituted the majority and the predominant group in this settler's colony. They held public office, many were active members in the various associations at Corinth, and many maintained good social relations with important Roman families.²³ These former slaves might have been hostile to slaves because they wanted to maintain their own advantageous position.²⁴ It is true that the ranking of slaves was complex; however, it does not negate the fact that the closed system of elites developed in Corinth would have hardly allowed slaves to have reliable allies to defend them in the group of freedmen.²⁵ The slaves were on their own, although they were not their own.

We usually read the perspective of the Corinthians from what Paul articulates in his response letter, as if it is only through Paul's ideas and through his elaborated theology one can examine the social reality of the Corinthians, while viewing other positions "in caricature."²⁶ It may be useful for us to develop instead certain understanding of the community prior to receiving the letter we have as 1 Corinthians, and "reconstruct Paul's theological voice as one among many."²⁷ The focus is on the slaves and on how "those of Chloe" are experiencing the situations happening in this assembly. It would be near impossible for them to go to Paul without the permission of their mistress. Despite her potentially not belonging to this congregation, those in possession would require her approval to go to Paul. It is not clear whether they are expressing their own concerns to Paul or whether they are reporting exactly what their mistress told them to report—in case she was a member of this assembly. It is plausible that when Chloe's people informed Paul about the various charismatic leaders to which believers had aligned themselves, Chloe might have been one of them. Perhaps those of Chloe thought they were servicing the community and the variegated groups within it by talking about the divisions. Alternatively, perhaps Chloe and her people were disappointed when Paul's letter was read in the assembly and he did not make any mention of "those who belong to Chloe," or any association with possible women leaders in the assembly, thus minimizing women's agency and the influence of prophetesses in Corinth.²⁸

Paul may also have asked τῶν Χλόης to elaborate on what was going on, and to explain what they saw and how they lived/experienced what was taking place in Corinth; those of Chloe represented an important link between the community and Paul. The way Paul framed his answers to various questions stemming from groups of the assembly may have been in relation to how the information he received from "those of Chloe" was framed.

The first issue Paul mentions in his response is that of division. Could it be that this subject be the first to be shared with the apostle because it was the most disturbing to those of Chloe? More than any other issues in this community, the division in the assembly could have been the most damaging and the most traumatic to the slaves. Paul addresses this topic first: "Is Christ

divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor 1:13). Paul would have wanted to separate himself from the factions. The issue of division is the only one that involves Paul. Being enmeshed in the messiness of social and political strife would have put Paul in a difficult position and would have compromised his leadership. Addressing this point first, he would have managed to disentangle himself from a position that put him on the same social, political, and spiritual level as those involved in the variegated and potentially tense social groups. Paul aligns himself, not with any group, but with Christ, who in his view, clearly should not have been made to be part of this mess. However, in trying to move away from the entanglement that the factions created, Paul stumbles in his explanations. He purports not to have baptized any of them except Crispus and Gaius, "so no one can say that you were baptized into my name" (1 Cor 1:14). By this move in his argument, he did not want to have anyone resorting to the fact that he had baptized some members of the community to mean that these people would be considered as being part of his group. Paul realized—mid-sentence as it were—as he was probably dictating to, or musing on his words with, a secretary,²⁹ that he was involved in baptizing more than two: "Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else" (1 Cor 1:16, trans. NIV).³⁰ Here one can observe first that slaves participated in Paul's baptisms in Corinth. Secondly, Paul's statement about not remembering whether he has baptized more people does not mean he did not. Thus, in spite of Paul's efforts to free himself from association with particular sides, he may have been seen by many to be associated with or to have given precedence to certain groups. Some whom Paul may have baptized could have felt superior to others in this *ekklēsia*, at least in a spiritual sense, simply based on the fact they had been baptized by the apostle. Others, such as the slaves of Stephanas' household—Fortunatus and Achaichus referred to in 16:17, and it could have been Stephanas' slaves—may have seen themselves as belonging to the select group associated with an important teacher, or to a particular and respected slaveholder in the assembly, and thus may have served as rivals to those of Chloe's household. Hence, a possible reason and a matter of utmost significance to those of Chloe to have been sent—or to have felt the need to go—with a report to Paul of what was happening in Corinth.

One may imagine the confusion, the strain, the hopes and fears, and even the bitterness that those of Chloe could have felt in going to Paul. They have not been baptized by him or baptized in his name, they do not belong to his circle, and they are the property of their owner, Chloe. If she were a member of this community, they would have only been associated with this community of Christ-followers worshiping in Corinth through her; they may not have had any personal belief in this Jewish god preached by an itinerant Jewish preacher named Paul. If they belonged to this assembly, without Chloe also being a member there, they would have been even more vulnerable in this

space. Without their mistress, who could have served as a safeguard for them because of her alleged respected status, those of Chloe would have been all the more vulnerable in this assembly characterized by clear demarcations.

The issue of division is a real concern for Paul. He returns to it after a brief theological interlude: "I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants (δῆκονοι), through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task" (1 Cor 3:2–5). Paul tries to distance himself and Apollos from the pedestal certain members of the assembly have placed them on. He uses δῆκονοι to refer to his role and to Apollos' function in this community. He tries to make Apollos his ally in his framing of the situation (3:6; 3:22; 4:6), and he indicates to the Corinthians that all are theirs, whether himself, Apollos or Cephas (3:22). It is not clear what Paul means by the Corinthians acting as mere human beings (3:3).³¹ They are, after all, social beings interlaced in the messiness of social, political, and economic realities in first-century Corinth. They may have received what Paul and others would have deemed to be the Spirit of God, but they are still living and struggling within the confines of this world here and now, with all the social, economic, and political implications and tensions associated with it.

In 1 Cor 3:5, Paul refers to himself as a δῆκονος in ministry to the community—not a δοῦλος—and there is no evidence that Paul considered the two terms synonymous and could thus be used interchangeably.³² The question I am interested in pursuing at this juncture is why Paul would not use his preferred δοῦλος at this particular moment in the argument. If we place this particular move within the context of slaves being imbricated in the assembly's quarrels, we may then have a clue. Again, let us consider those of Chloe. They report to Paul about the factions undermining the unity of the assembly. They are, willingly or not, part of the entanglement. Paul wants to distance himself from being part of the divisions. He tries to disassociate himself from the fray by alluding to the fact that he did not baptize anyone except a few. However, this explanation did not come out the way he intended and thus, was unconvincing. He does not continue to use the point about baptism as a way to distance himself after the initial instance. At this particular point in 1 Cor 3, he does not want to use a word—in this case δοῦλος—which would have associated him with a definitive group in the assembly or a term that could be a source of confusion to some individuals in Corinth. He is not a slave, nor is Apollos. In a spiritual sense, they may well be slaves, but the Corinthians are mere infants in Christ at this point and may not grasp the full extent of what he could have meant to articulate. He is at their service as a δῆκονος in order to build the community up, but he is not involved in slave-type servitude to them.

Paul places himself as both a gentle father (4:15) and a forceful disciplinarian in how he concludes his first point in response to the report he received from Chloe's people. He is not writing to shame them, but to warn them as his dear children (1 Cor 4:14); however, he might have to come to them with a rod or a stick (ἐν ῥάβδῳ) (4:20), if they did not prefer his kind and sensitive exhortations to shun divisions. The image of someone with a rod for chastisement is a clear correspondence to the attitude of a Roman *paterfamilias* with authority over his slaves.³³ God punishes his children for violating his commands, yet he loves them and he will never stop being faithful to his covenantal duties to them. Paul, in a sense, adopts a role similar to that of God. He is willing to discipline, yet he loves; he wants the best for the wayward member living in a prohibited sexual relationship. However, one may also suggest that the metaphor of God as one who bought the Corinthians with a price (1 Cor 6:20a; 7:23a), that is, as slaves on the market, allows one to see Paul as a disciplinarian head slave working to establish order under a divine master. Paul has already reminded them that not many of them "were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise" (1 Cor 2:26). He will continue to remind the members of the Christ assembly at Corinth that "You were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:20a; 7:23a). Paul is unable to refrain from making use of slavery as a trope to think through the social situations in Corinth. He does not use the language of "slave of Christ" to refer to himself, but he uses vocabulary drawn from slavery to refer to those in Corinth, thereby reminding them that they owe him a great deal as a power broker for Christ,³⁴ and the one who purchased the Corinthians from the marketplace.³⁵ Paul reminds them that he can certainly come with a whip or a stick (ἐν ῥάβδῳ, 4:21), to straighten the slaves and former slaves in Corinth if they do not align themselves with him, and ultimately with Christ. It is not clear how slave owners in this *ekklēsia* would have heard and understood this forceful language coming from this Jewish preacher. Are they also to fear him as a slave would fear a master? Are they also commodities available to be sold and resold? Does belonging to this community put them in a vulnerable position of being the object of Paul's and the Jewish god's wrath and corrections? How would that be made manifest in the reality of things?

One of the usual procedures adopted in studying Paul and the subject of slavery in 1 Corinthians is to start the discussion with chapter 7, where there is a clear reference to the situation of those in institutional slavery. However, as we have shown thus far, there is much to be gained in starting the investigation from the beginning of the letter and pondering how the subject of slavery might occupy a greater dimension in the analysis, arguments, and responses of Paul to the circumstances in Corinth. We have looked at the issue of division and we have seen how the slaves were possibly involved in the divisions. They may have been prompted to play certain roles in the

machinations of power, or they may have had specific interests of their own as well, as they participated in the quarrels.

The subsequent topic that Paul addresses is that of a man in a relationship with his father's wife (5:1), and the silence of the assembly in rectifying this prohibited sexual relation that Paul considers Πορνεία. If we try to look at the situation from the perspective of the slaves in the congregation, and from the viewpoint of those of Chloe who were living this atmosphere of voices being silenced, we may then interpret the situation differently. We have assumed that those of Chloe might have been slaves—although the possibility of clients and freed slaves is not altogether excluded—and that they were observing and participating in the social maneuvers from a particular standpoint. One explanatory hypothesis suggested for the reason of the assembly's silence on such perceived outrageous behaviour is that the man involved was a rich patron.³⁶ If one accepts this to be the case, then it was probably the man's social prestige, influence and power that kept many members of the Corinthian assembly silent. One may also propose that the man was a slaveholder and the woman a slave belonging to his father, and thus, also belonging to him. The community may not have seen any moral breach in a sexual relationship involving a master and his slave.³⁷ Paul, as suggested by various interpreters, targets not the man or the woman involved in the situation but the community, which probably approves and accepts, or at least does not oppose the man's deed.³⁸ The presence of the incestuous man in the community represents, in Paul's understanding, a threat to the well-being of the whole community, which Paul represents with the metaphor of leaven (5:6–8).³⁹ Jennifer Glancy comments, "Since *porneia* represents such a threat to the well-being of the community, it would seem that the entire community would have interest in eliminating it. However, the boundaries of behaviours defined as *porneia* remains unclear: Would slaves who submitted sexually to their owners number among the *pornoi*? At stake, although not explicitly addressed, is the status of slaves in the community."⁴⁰ The status of slaves and their functions within the assembly remain ambiguous. Those of Chloe would have known the situation of the man having a relationship with his father's wife and they would not have had any clear response to it. They probably knew her and, if indeed she were a slave, they would have understood some of what she might have had to endure from their own experience. Those of Chloe report to Paul about this situation and Paul seems to have been still in a reacting mode. He still does not address the social situation of those in slavery. One may imagine how the issue of enslaved persons in this *ekklēsia* grew in importance as Paul is responding to the different issues raised. One may then situate Paul's complicated passage about slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21–24 in light of the previous chapters.

1 Corinthians 7:21–24 constitutes the best answer Paul could have proposed regarding institutional slavery, and should not be divorced from the previous attempts by Paul to avoid addressing such a serious and pressing condition to

many in this particular assembly. Those of Chloe who reported to Paul about the issues should not be dismissed either in how they might have influenced how Paul framed his response. The impact of Paul's answer to the slaves, freedpersons, and to the slave owners in Corinth is also important to consider. Paul states:

Δοῦλος ἐκλήθης; μή σοι μελέτω· ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρήσαι. ὁ γὰρ ἐν κυρίῳ κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου ἐστίν· ὁμοίως ὁ ἐλεύθερος κληθεὶς δοῦλός ἐστιν Χριστοῦ. τιμῆς ἡγοράσθητε· μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων. ἕκαστος ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη, ἀδελφοί, ἐν τούτῳ μενέτω παρὰ θεῶ.

Were you a slave when called? Do not let it concern you. But even if you can [if you are also able] to gain [your] freedom, rather use it. For the one who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedperson of the Lord. Likewise the one who was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of humans [people]. In whatever state each was called, brothers [and sisters], remain in this with God (my translation).

How would Chloe's people understand Paul's direct and only address to slaves? In other words, how would they comprehend and appropriate Paul's language to them and those in a social condition like them? I am interested in how these verses could have been formulated as an answer to a direct question asked by those belonging to Chloe. They could have had anxieties over their own status as slaves in the assembly and how that social positioning placed them in precarious situations. They may have wondered how they could possibly be functioning as full members of this assembly in their position as slaves.⁴¹ It may or may not have been possible for them to obtain manumission through paying their own way out,⁴² or it may be they did not want to be free from, or had no other choice but to serve Chloe.⁴³ We have assumed all along they are slaves, but we may not know when they became so. Were they born slaves? Did they sell themselves to become slaves because of the unbearable misery of a poor person living without social welfare? There is no way to know. In Paul's statement, one can see how he is attempting to address these questions. For Paul, those of Chloe and those like them should not let anxiety about their social conditions determine their lives. The course of action Paul suggests is to gain freedom, if that is at all possible; otherwise, one should not be anxious about one's social condition as a slave. Then, he reverts to the slave of Christ metaphor in 7:22 to address the situation of the slave. One should not become a slave under the authority of people because they are already slaves of Christ, "bought at a price" (7:23). In essence, Paul is saying: If you are a slave, do not worry about it. If you can get yourself out of it, by any means do so.⁴⁴ If you are a poor Christ-follower but you are not a slave, do not sell yourself to better your life and escape the misery of being

destitute;⁴⁵ you are already a slave of Christ who, as a master, has bought you out at a price.⁴⁶ Those of Chloe in particular would have heard this as a way to continue to be in this assembly and not be concerned about their conditions as slaves. If they can, and/or if they are willing to enter into a new social standing of freedpersons, they should obtain freedom; otherwise, they should remain in the situation God has called them to.

Paul's address concerning the social standing of those in slavery is done in the context of his theologizing about God's calling. For him, "God's call had come to the Corinthians without regard to their various religious and social-legal situations ... any attempt by the Corinthians to 'improve' their relation with God by making any change in their social or religious status was tantamount to *not* continuing in God's call."⁴⁷ However, his theologizing about calling does not exclude the real possibility of trying to change one's social status. Paul addresses not only the slaves in their predicament, but also the freedpersons in the assembly. They also need to remember that they are properties with regard to their standing before God. In other words, all are slaves in their posture towards God. Hence, no one should act as if one can experience life without a master, and Paul does not seem able to conceive of life without belonging to a master. In trying to address the situation of those in servitude, he still reverts to the trope, the imageries, and the use of language associated with slavery. God becomes the master *par excellence*, and Paul, a slave supervising other slaves, although he does not refer to himself using his usual term of reference "slave of Christ" to articulate his points. The material and social realities of slaves at Corinth place Paul's theological priorities—God's calling; the present crisis (1 Cor 7:26); harmony and ethical living among Christ-followers to serve as examples to those outside the community—in tension with those for whom being a slave might not have been simply a matter of where one was (that is, in which social condition one happened to be) at the time of one's spiritual calling. Also, the situation of those in slavery may have put pressure on many slaves in this assembly to heed Paul's advice of not letting that concern them.

What Paul said and what he meant is not the same as what those of Chloe and the recipients of his missive would have heard. He might have meant to say that their calling in God is essential and more important than their particular life circumstances; that they should not worry about particular social concerns. However, those of Chloe and the slaves in Corinth hearing the letter read may have heard of a deity purchasing slaves, and Paul serving as the deity's broker. They may have heard that everyone is bought with a price; that they are all slaves of Christ and that even the slave owners in the assembly are mere commodities as well.⁴⁸ They may have insinuated to others that the apostle addresses their specific situation by encouraging them to gain freedom, if that is a possibility, but that they should not worry about their social status as slaves.⁴⁹ They may have heard that their calling in Christ is of great significance, but that it does not erase social hierarchy and social status in the

assembly. They may have heard that their material conditions are of no consequences on account of the impending *Parousia* and the ushering of God's kingdom here on earth (7:26). In this sense, slavery to Christ takes precedence over slavery to a human master, making the latter irrelevant because it is secondary.

For one last time in the letter, Paul returns to the trope of slaves. It is as if he is still unsure whether what he articulated previously with regard to the issues and conditions of those in slavery is altogether convincing to those living as slaves. He states that although he is free and does not belong to anyone he makes himself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible (8:19). For an enslaved person hearing these words, Paul still does not grasp the intricacies related to the social and material conditions of being a slave. It is not clear how he makes himself a mere commodity subjected to the oppression and exploitation of everyone. Paul seems, once again, to revert to thinking theologically in alluding to become all things to all (τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, 9:22) in order to save some, without weighing sufficiently on what it means socially, and even existentially, for some members of the *ekklesia* in Corinth to function as mere objects or living tools available for different services. Paul's efforts at the maintenance of *homonoia* ("concord") in the *ekklesia* are done at the expense of fully grasping the multiple identities and affiliations of various members of this community.⁵⁰ The difficult social differences imposed on slaves to be full members participating in the gospel of Christ are not taken into consideration. Status differences imposed barriers that religious ideologies could not help level. Paul seems to have been aware of that, but his theological discourse tends to disregard this conundrum.

Paul and the Corinthians have had a very difficult relationship. Misunderstandings of the other's discourse and interests, and (mis)appropriation of the other's practices, seem to have been a constant feature in the complex relation between Paul and the Corinthians. For him, they are his brothers (1:10, 11; 16:15) and children in the faith (3:1; 14:20), and he feels responsible to help them in their faith.⁵¹ However, he has not always been able to convince them that he has the best of intentions.⁵² Paul has been imbricated in the factions vying for power and influence in that particular assembly and what he says does not quite resolve the tensions. Also, his injunctions to the slaves to choose freedom if they can does not help advance the cause of those belonging to certain households. At best, the slaves who could not choose freedom could resign themselves in contemplating the impending coming of Christ to alleviate their plight. The slaves who could be manumitted could join the coveted group of freed slaves in Corinth and the slave owners could continue to enjoy the works of their slaves and former slaves and the social support of their clients while wondering what exactly Paul meant and what the implications are—theologically and socially—for the apostle to state that they were bought with a price.

The goal in this first part of the chapter was to look at Paul's relationship with the Corinthians by highlighting the figures of slaves in this congregation.

By doing this, it becomes apparent that Paul's discourse was muddled and his attention was away from the plight of those who were considered as mere objects, the slaves. Those from Chloe, it was suggested, may have been slaves who informed Paul of the difficult social reality of slaves in the community, which may have subsequently pushed Paul to address the situation of institutional slavery head on. The slaves of Chloe and those like them in the community realized upon hearing the letter read to the assembly that Paul, although he might have certain understanding of their situation, did not and could not do better than theologizing about their social situation. The hope Paul offered them was that slavery will not last for too long and they should consider that everyone has a master in a spiritual sense, and that everybody in the Christ community in Corinth is bought with a price.

3.2 A (freed) slave in Philippians

Now, let us explore a different situation, namely, that of the (freed) slave Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25–30. The aim of this second part of the chapter is to argue that this particular figure, in his service to Paul, may serve as a way to better understand how social forms and forces affected and categorized slaves in Paul's company. Paul presents himself as a slave of Christ in Philippians 1:1 and Epaphroditus is presented as an apostle/messenger on behalf of the assembly (2:25). However, as I will demonstrate, these descriptions do not function at the societal level. Paul may well be a slave of Christ, but his rhetoric shows he is one in control, and Epaphroditus may well be an apostle, but his rhetorical construction is that of one serving as a (freed) slave.

In Philippians, Paul commends Epaphroditus,⁵³ his envoy from the Philippians, because he served him as a *λειτουργός*, that is as one serving in a public capacity.⁵⁴ Joseph Marchal observes, "By describing Epaphroditus in this fashion, Paul's argument reflects the assumed utility of someone sent by the assembly to do a public duty or service (*λειτουργία*). Epaphroditus can be sent back and forth by Paul and other parties, functioning as an instrument to be used for their own purposes."⁵⁵ Epaphroditus' service had been offered on behalf of the Philippians, which, to Paul, was "a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God" (4:18). The colonial context of Philippi, with the corollary of the existence of dispossessed peasant colonist families, and the particular difficult economic situation of the Christ assembly there, points to the possibility that it may have indeed been a sacrifice for them to send some financial gifts to Paul.⁵⁶ Thus, Epaphroditus functioned as a helper or as a broker to Paul on behalf of the Christ-group in Philippi.⁵⁷ Epaphroditus might have been a slave or a freed slave, whose service provided to Paul has been traditionally understood in the form of monetary offerings.⁵⁸ Epaphroditus may have been a (freed) slave based on three factors. Firstly, his name is a common one that is used in some cases for slaves or freedmen.⁵⁹ Secondly, in a city with a significant percentage of slaves and former slaves with

patronal obligations, it is plausible he might have been in one or the other category.⁶⁰ Thirdly, and perhaps most convincingly, Paul's rhetoric presents Epaphroditus as a body in motion and as a ministering body susceptible to be exchanged or sent back and forth, which corresponds to the position of an obedient slave or a former slave attached to a former owner or patron.⁶¹

Epaphroditus is valued for his service; he serves as an in-between body for the Philippians and Paul;⁶² he is a liminal figure that gives of his time, his strength, and of his presence.⁶³ He is a carrier of good tidings, yet he functions merely as a figure that is talked about. He is sent and is about to be sent back. He risked "his life to make up for the help" the Philippians could not give Paul (2:30). He is commanded by Paul, yet his voice and presence are silenced; there is not even one word attributed to this fellow worker. His presence seems to be acknowledged simply, or primarily, in the duty he performs for Paul and for the Philippians. Paul encourages them to "welcome men like him," not for who he is as a person, but because "he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me" (2:29–30). What is the reverse argument of this injunction? Would Paul assert that they should not welcome him if he did not risk his life for them? It is not at all clear what Paul means by the fact that Epaphroditus risked his life to make up for the help they could not give him.⁶⁴ Overall, what is clear is that Epaphroditus is commanded by Paul for his service, for how useful he has been to him, and for how he went beyond what was expected of him and risked his life to bring honour to the Philippians and to Paul. Epaphroditus functioned as a model of faithful (freed) slave, who is presented as an example to others. He is not to be shamed by anyone; the Philippians should "honor men like him." If we still want to consider the possibility that Epaphroditus has been taken into custody when he came to serve Paul then we may allow the prospect of him being perceived by certain members at Philippi as doubly shameful. The stigma attached to being imprisoned and to his social status as a (freed) slave would have put him in this predicament.⁶⁵ In this imaginative reconstruction, Paul would not have wanted the group to shun their messenger because of his social condition or because of what had possibly happened to him when he came to a Roman jail—he faced cruel guards and was put in chains, not any fault of his own, therefore: "honor men like him!" The shame that is associated with his social condition should be lifted, or at least not considered of consequence, because of the slave's service and risks he took for a cause that is beyond the here and now. He is an honourable person; he is one who is associated with an honourable apostle. As such, he is Paul's brother, his fellow worker and soldier. It is in his work as one who serves that Epaphroditus finds his honour.

Epaphroditus clearly functions as one who enhances Paul's honour, in spite of Paul's rhetoric that he is on an equal footing with himself (*συνεργὸν καὶ συστρατιώτην*, 2:25). In fact, Paul is the one who matters most in the relationship. The (freed) slave primarily exists, as presented in the account, to be

at the service of the apostle. Paul in prison is “amply supplied” (4:18), in receiving from Epaphroditus the gifts the Philippians sent to him. Paul’s social status is multilayered and dissonant. He is a low-risk prisoner of Rome, which is, in this sense, that of a non-entity. Yet, he is in the eyes of many in the Christ-group in Philippi a beloved preacher of the gospel of Christ. Paul is in chains, but to many Christ believers in Philippi, he still holds an important role and deserves to be financially supported. Paul needs the financial provision of the Philippians to survive, although he undervalues such support (4:10–13; 16–17).⁶⁶ He wants to maintain his position as being part of the mature group (3:15) and as the one who still has authority over them, at least rhetorically, in spite of his social circumstances. Paul calls them his “dear friends,” who “have always obeyed”—not only in his presence, but now much more in his absence (2:12). He hopes to have sufficient (manly) courage so that, as always, Christ will be exalted in his body, whether by life or by death (1:20). The erotic imagery that these phrases evoke is that Paul finds his manly courage in his association with a manly Christ who takes pleasure in his body, regardless whether the body is alive or not.⁶⁷ With regard to the Philippians, they are under his apostolic authority. In this picture, Epaphroditus is at Paul’s service, since they are absent.

Joseph Marchal has recently proposed the daring and intriguing possibility of Epaphroditus offering more to Paul than financial resources. For him, “This ‘unman’ is exchanged in an imperial context where (freed) slaves are put to a range of uses, including the embodied and erotic uses that are common register of their gendered status.”⁶⁸ Marchal takes Paul’s use of *χρεία* in 2:25 to mean, or to include in the range of meaning, that Paul’s sexual needs are satisfied by Epaphroditus. I am unconvinced by this argument because it is far-fetched; being sent to do a public service does not automatically mean one is acting as “unman,” susceptible to be used erotically. It is true, as Marchal reminds us, that one cannot divorce economic elements from embodied reality in the ancient slave system,⁶⁹ but one should not assume automatically that economic service or public service done by a slave necessitated, *ipso facto*, erotic performance.⁷⁰ In the case of Paul’s relationship to Epaphroditus, Epaphroditus was not his (freed) slave; he could not do to him how he pleased. He was, in how Paul rhetorically constructs him to be, Paul’s “brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier” (2:25).⁷¹ Epaphroditus certainly functioned as a helper who was sent by the Philippians to take care of Paul’s economic needs (2:25), and Paul now thinks it necessary (*ἀναγκαῖον*) to send him back to them.⁷² Epaphroditus, at least as shaped in these few lines, is certainly that of a body in motion and his constant movements had a consequence on that body. Epaphroditus became very ill, to the point of death (2:26–27). He became a body of death in the midst of a mission to bring life to Paul in prison.

What is frustrating to us as we try to highlight or to notice the voice of the ancient slaves is that we do not have any murmur from Epaphroditus. The

narratives can be constructed differently if we develop a social imagination of Epaphroditus as a subject and not as a mere body in motion. He was sent with provisions. There is a certain amount of trust in him on the part of the Philippians that he will obey, and that he will do his duties. From what Paul says to the Philippians about welcoming him and honouring men like him (2:29), one may infer that he may not have been thought of being worthy from receiving any particular welcoming treatment and honour on their part; he was, as far as they were concerned, a (freed) and obedient slave doing what was expected of him, and even going beyond the call of duty. Paul sends him back with commendations as a brother, as one who toiled alongside him and as a fellow soldier (2:25). For Paul, he is more than one doing a service; he is a brother.⁷³ Nonetheless, the characteristics Paul uses to associate with Epaphroditus all have physical resonances: he is a fellow worker and a fellow soldier. One should not be too quick in dismissing the possibility that Epaphroditus may well have done physical labors alongside Paul. He might have worked as one who helped Paul in spreading the gospel prior to Paul's imprisonment as well, but that does not automatically disqualify him from physical activities. Paul was no armchair theologian; preaching the gospel and manual labor went hand in hand for him.⁷⁴ Being Paul's fellow soldier obviously does have a spiritual connotation, but that should not lead one to think it is totally divorced from social realities. Soldiering with Paul may have meant obeying him as the one in command and participating in whatever enterprise he deemed necessary. Soldiering with Paul may have the connotation of being on Paul's side, of being loyal to him, of facing conflicts and adversaries together, and of reporting to him on happenings in a particular community. It may suggest one who is there with him and available to attend to his needs, exactly as Epaphroditus was doing in his visit to Paul in prison.

The Philippians need to know that this (freed) slave is totally devoted to Paul and that, as their leader, Paul felt it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to them after his grave time of illness in prison, and thus they need to welcome Epaphroditus and honour (freed) slaves behaving so obediently and so faithfully like him. The only time a murmur of Epaphroditus becomes apparent is in his longing for/yearning (*ἐπιποθῶν*) after them who sent him away to Paul and him being sorely troubled, dismayed, in anguish, or mentally distressed (*ἀδηνουνῶν*) because the Philippians heard he was ill and almost died (2:26–27). The picture is of one who is experiencing trauma through elevated anxiety, mourning, anguish, and grief. The grief Epaphroditus is experiencing is caused by his absence. Paul is eager to send him back because he, also, is experiencing stress (Phil 2:28). Life-threatening illness is one of the causes of emotional and psychological trauma and Epaphroditus may be considered as one who is affected by trauma and one who shows signs related to trauma.⁷⁵ In the case of Epaphroditus, we have three indicators describing him: he was distressed (Phil 2:26), he almost died because of illness (2:27), and he risked his life to make up for the help the Philippians could not

give Paul (2:30). In modern parlance, he had an acute stress disorder (ASD), and he experienced somatic symptoms linked to some sort of traumatic event. What is not clear is the time frame (between three days and one month?), and whether he experienced any dissociative symptoms. It is not clear either what Paul meant exactly when he said Epaphroditus risked his life for him. The somatic and the psychological are linked, and one cannot determine easily which one comes first, or which one is the cause of the other. Was Epaphroditus experiencing life-threatening illness because of the absence, distance, and longing from those who sent him, or was he distressed, that is, was he in a state of hyper anxiety because, as Paul seems to understand the case, the Philippians heard he (their envoy) was ill (2:26)? One should not eliminate the possibility that the restricted movement in an overcrowded space of confinement, the insanitary conditions, and possibly having suffered from malnutrition—hunger was common in ancient Roman prisons—and mistreatment by jailers may have put Epaphroditus in the position to become ill to the point of death.⁷⁶

Epaphroditus seems to correspond to the analysis done by the psychologist and psychoanalyst Germaine Guex on abandonment, “*C’est sur ce trépied de l’angoisse qu’éveille tout abandon, de l’agressivité qu’il fait naître et de la non-valorisation de soi-même (devaluation of self) qui en découle, que s’édifie toute la symptomalogie de cette névrose.*”⁷⁷ In other words, applied to our case, the anguish is what triggers the non-valorization of Epaphroditus’ very self and, consequently, pushed him to be more concerned for those who sent him, yearning to be at their service once again more than he cared for his own life, which, apparently is not the cause of his distress. The semantic range associated with Epaphroditus is that of one who took risks in order to make up for the help the Philippians could not give Paul (2:30), and one who was close to dying while in service to Paul in prison. He longs to be sent back to the Philippians because he was anguished they heard he was ill. Grief, desires, anxiety, and possibly fear of violence place Epaphroditus in a messy situation resulting in mental distress; that is, of him not quite knowing what to do. In fact, he does not seem able to do anything on his own volition. He needs Paul to send him back so he can resume his duties with the Philippians. At that point, he can try to explain to them that it was no one else’s fault that he was ill to death, and that he is sorry for any trouble he might have caused them and Paul. Paul experienced anxiety because of him (2:28). He did not want to cause any concern to anyone, and this is why he was so eager to be sent back to them, and to continue to obey them and be a strong body in motion for them, serving as one who is willing to risk his own life for the honour of the community. Even if he may not receive any recognition, or that the Christ-group in Philippi would not welcome him as a valuable brother, honour him, or valorize the service of other (freed) slaves like him, Epaphroditus is content he can go back and continue his service as one they can always count on to be obedient, ready to be sent out as a faithful (freed) slave body.

3.3 The slave in Philemon

The last enslaved character in Paul's letters I want to focus on is Onesimus. The aim of this part of the chapter is to engage with the buried and silenced voice of Onesimus. I will explore the function of Onesimus in the letter, his silenced status, and how his silence may be evocative of the powerful voice of either the social system or possibly that of God. I will then allow myself to briefly consider the courageous theological proposition of Matthew V. Johnson that God is speaking not through Paul but through the voice of Onesimus, which "has been rendered effectively opaque."⁷⁸ I will also move beyond the theological to study the social forces that have orchestrated Onesimus' silence.

Paul wrote this "letter of petition (*Bittschrift*)"⁷⁹ not only to Philemon his "dear friend and fellow worker" (1), but also to "Aphia the sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the *ekklēsia* that gather in your house" (2). It was important for Paul to include Ἀφρία τῇ ἀδελφῇ, who is usually assumed to be Philemon's wife, in the dealing with the runaway slave, because she may have been the one who reported to Philemon how "useless" the slave Onesimus appeared to her.⁸⁰ Thus, the letter is an open correspondence, although Philemon is the target, as the receiver of the epistle (from 7 onwards). Paul feels that by virtue of his position in Christ he could be bold (παρησιάν) and exhort Philemon to do what he ought to (ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἀνήκον) (8). The rhetorical reason he gives for not engaging in a forceful confrontation is because of love: "I appeal to you [rather] on the basis of love" (διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ) (9). The rhetorical force of Paul's appeal is reinforced by highlighting the fact that he is an old man (πρεσβύτης), who is also at the moment a prisoner of/on behalf of Christ Jesus (δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ) (9).⁸¹ Paul resorts to using the word παρακαλῶ once again to make his request to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, who became his (spiritual) son while he was in chains (παρακαλῶ σε περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς Ὀνήσιμον) (10).

Onesimus fled from his master Philemon, and probably had a legitimate reason for doing so. As Jennifer A. Glancy reminds us, "slaves who fled their owners used their bodies to defy their relegation to the status of bodies for others."⁸² In verse 14, Paul explains that he is sending Onesimus back to Philemon so that he can be freed to return to Paul to assist him in his labors, so that the good done by Philemon will not be forced but stem from his own free volition. The rhetorical representation of Onesimus is that he was formerly "useless" (ἄχρηστον) to Philemon and he is now deemed to be "useful" (εὐχρηστον), both to Philemon and to Paul (11).⁸³ Paul is sending Onesimus back, who he considers to be his very heart (ἐμὰ τὰ σπλάγχνα; literally, his inward parts) (12). He is sending Onesimus to his previous owner Philemon, "no longer as a slave but beyond a slave (ὕπερ δούλον), as a beloved brother" (ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν) (16). Paul, however, nowhere urges Philemon to manumit

Onesimus. Conversion seems to be perceived as raising the slave above his earthly (legal) status.

Onesimus acted as one with a will of his own when he fled.⁸⁴ He was in the household of Philemon where a Christ-group met, but did not share the faith of his master, and therefore, he was not a brother. He probably fled because he knew he could not continue living in this household and without participating in the rituals consecrated to this god. He could have been subject to repeated beatings for insulting or for not participating in the worship of his master's deity. Domestic cult practices remain an important feature of the ancient domestic household. There is evidence that the spaces and shrine types used by the free family could have been different from that of the slave *familia* with the intention of maintaining and reinforcing the internal domestic hierarchy. However, on some occasions, the free family and household slaves could participate together in venerating the household gods.⁸⁵ Even if Onesimus could have disregarded his master's deity among slaves like himself, who dutifully offered prayers on behalf of their owners to the master's god, he still had to participate in special cultic celebrations such as, say, the so-called Lord's Supper as server and participant. It is possible that on that specific occasion Christ-adhering masters would break social etiquette by eating with their slaves, although that was not always possible.⁸⁶ From the master's perspective, Onesimus occupies the category of a bad slave. The bad slave is not industrious in the house of his master; the bad slave hates and dishonours his master; God himself hates a bad slave.⁸⁷ In this sense, Paul in prison is able to persuade Onesimus to become a good slave, that is, to turn into one who is useful. The good slave is loyal and diligent in the house of his master; he does what he is told; he accepts wholeheartedly the social traditions and/or "religions" of the household where he works; he is vigilant and honours his master, and God himself loves such slave.⁸⁸ Onesimus accepts Paul's reasoning; he contends he was wrong. He is now a brother in the Lord and he wants to be useful, but he is not certain he wants to go back to his former master. He would rather stay with Paul and serve him as a slave. Paul would like to keep him, but he does not want to commit a property offense to Onesimus' legal master (14).⁸⁹ This is why he uses all his persuasiveness and rhetorical dexterity to convince Philemon that Onesimus is now useful.⁹⁰ It is not very clear what Paul means here: "He is especially dear to me but more than most to you in the flesh and in the lord" (μάλιστα ἐμοί, πόσῳ δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ) (16). Paul shows a particular attachment to Onesimus. He is Paul's son, whom he begat in prison (10); he is Paul's very heart (12) and is especially dear to the aged apostle (16). Paul seems to have genuinely loved Onesimus as his boy (10).⁹¹ He wants Philemon to understand "how much rather" (πόσῳ δὲ μᾶλλον) special Onesimus is to him, as Onesimus' master, both in the services the slave can provide as a good and obedient slave, who now shares in and abides by the same religious persuasions as his master.

Onesimus is presented to the reader as a body in motion. He fled but is now about to be sent back as an obedient and useful brother/slave to his master. Onesimus is a body whose usefulness and worth is embedded in his services. Paul wants to keep him, but will send him back, with the hope that the slave could instead stay and help him while he is in chains (13). Onesimus' role is to serve Paul or Philemon; he is deemed to exist for the specific purpose of serving others. The letter is not about the slave, but about Paul wanting to have him at his service, provided Philemon is in agreement with such proposal. Paul presents Onesimus as if he was already his, and as if standing as a substitute in his place.⁹² Any affront done to Paul's son would be an affront done to him; welcoming Onesimus would equate welcoming Paul. Thus, Paul states, "If you consider me a partner/if you have κοινωνόν with me, welcome him/receive him as you would welcome/receive me" (17). Onesimus is presented as belonging to Paul and if there is anything else to pay for, "any wrong" the slave might have done; if Onesimus owes his (former) master anything, the (new) master Paul is asking Philemon to charge it to him (18). Paul makes the transaction a matter of fact before even asking Philemon for permission to do so, yet he still wants to assure the slave's master that he does not want to do anything without his consent, so that "any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced" (14).

The language of transaction is prevalent in the letter.⁹³ Paul signs with his own hand, and he assures Philemon once again he will pay him back for whatever his protégé might owe the slave owner (19). He, nonetheless, reminds Philemon of his own debt with regard to Paul: "And you owe me yourself" (καὶ σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις). It is not clear what this debt consists of, or the exact nature of what Paul did on behalf of Philemon.⁹⁴ Paul, however, felt it necessary to allude to that episode in the open, which is to publicly remind or inform the recipients who are listening to that letter being read, that Philemon owes his very life to Paul.⁹⁵ The apostle does that to buttress his argument of persuading Philemon to accept Onesimus back in his household. The transaction, in Paul's understanding, is clear: you will do this because you owe me. Paul wishes he would have some benefit in the Lord from his brother (ναὶ ἀδελφέ, 20). One may note that this is the first time Paul calls Philemon his brother. He probably does so to soften the blow to Philemon, but he may also have done so to prepare Philemon for the final and very persuasive rhetorical move he is about to make. Paul is utterly persuaded of Philemon's obedience: "Confident of *your obedience* (τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου), I write to you, knowing that *you will do even more than I ask/you will do beyond the things I say*" (ὕπερ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις) (21). As if to make sure Philemon does as told, Paul lets him know that he hopes to be released soon from prison and he would like Philemon to prepare a guest room for him (22).⁹⁶

It is not clear whether Paul would come to Philemon's household in the company of Onesimus.⁹⁷ What is clear is that Paul does not leave any space for Philemon to do contrary to what he asks him to do. Paul shames

Philemon publicly not because he is anti-slavery, but because he wants the service of a particular slave. He does not want to take the slave without the consent of the slave's master, although he makes a compelling case for exactly that. Onesimus, in the end, will be accepted as one more than a slave by Philemon and he will continue to be Paul's child.

Paul makes sure Philemon realizes the letter is not a private correspondence; it is written from him and from the shadowy figure Timothy; it has the greetings of those around him in prison (23–24). The letter ends beautifully with a blessing that “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your [pl.] spirit” (τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, 25). Paul makes a transaction on behalf of Onesimus. The runaway slave will be sent back to the household of his former master Philemon.⁹⁸ Onesimus' departure from his master's house represented an attempt at voicing his concerns. The act of resistance on the part of Onesimus in fleeing from his master's house is, however, countered gently, lovingly, and skillfully by the apostle.⁹⁹ Paul did not recommend Onesimus to Philemon as a freedman. He sent him back as a slave who now, normally and as expected from a slave, shares the faith of his master and will do as ordered to be good and useful. Onesimus has to go back, and he likely has no other place to go to.¹⁰⁰

Onesimus is a fearful and traumatized body. Paul places himself between the master and the slave to reinstate the slave in the household of the master as more than a slave, rather, as a brother.¹⁰¹ Paul hopes to visit Philemon soon to assure that Philemon obeys and does even more than what the old apostle says. However, if Onesimus remains a slave in Philemon's *domus*, he has no clear guarantee that being a brother in Christ to the master signifies he will be treated as anything beyond being a mere slave who does what he is told. In other words, the slave's new status as a brother in Christ does not alter his mode of interaction with his master.¹⁰² Under the fear of the Lord, Onesimus has to fear both earthly and heavenly masters. He fled the household of Philemon and he is now part of the household of the Lord, from which he cannot flee.¹⁰³ Because he is now doubly bound, or better still, because he is bound as a “living tool” with an earthly master and a heavenly one, Onesimus will only have to be an obedient brother/slave.

The voice of Onesimus is nonexistent; it remains silent, drowned out by Paul's rhetoric. He is talked about, talked for, and he is talked over throughout this dialogue. The other prisoners send their greetings (23–24); Timothy is allegedly a co-sender of the letter (1), but Onesimus is utterly absent, lacking a voice of his own in the letter. He is not mentioned as one who has any form of humanity, agency, feeling, or as one having anything at all worth consideration. The production of silence is manufactured through the erasure of Onesimus in the text and in the scholarly treatment of the text.¹⁰⁴ Matthew V. Johnson captures Onesimus' silenced voice like no other with his evocative language worth quoting at length:

Onesimus represents the terrible and earth-shattering silences, the disruptive spaces buried beneath the grand narratives of oppressive elites. Beneath these surfaces, the un-integrated voices, the trauma of histories unwritten and unworked through, remain, straining through broken sibilants, interspersed with dashes and blank spaces in the repetitive rhythms of the mad and the maddeningly marginalized to be heard. Onesimus's voice, like the unintegrated inertness of trauma, disturbs the comfort zone of the text and like a pregnant silence impinges upon our cultural and spiritual imaginations. The gravitas of the slaves' silence refracts the passing of all other light, including Paul's glowing recommendations for brotherhood and acceptance on the part of slaveholding Philemon.¹⁰⁵

The voice of Onesimus may be recognized in and through the silence. It is in what is not said and in what is left unsaid that we may hear the slave; it is perhaps in what cannot be expressed for an enslaved person, and in the lost murmurs of Onesimus voicing his pains, his terror, and worries to Paul in prison that we may try to understand the gravitas of the slave's predicament. Through his silence and silenced status, Onesimus tells the story of a slave caught between, on the one hand, his real human drive and desire for freedom in fleeing away from his master's household and, on the other hand, the social reality of being a runaway slave whose survival is negotiated by an *amicus domini* who (re)presents him to his former master as a useful slave body and brother, open to be the subject of disembodied theological statements. It is unclear whether Onesimus will be able to voice his opinions or concerns and be able to speak to Philemon and explain why he fled his household in the first place; it is not clear whether Philemon would have understood the buried voice of the slave either. Thus, from the perspective of Onesimus, one may reimagine the narrative differently. It is only by paying attention to the silenced voice of the slave and by peering through his silenced past that we may be attuned to a different message. This is this message Matthew V. Johnson invites us to listen to. For him, "God is speaking primarily through Onesimus rather than Paul, or better yet, through the textual tensions created by the insinuation of Onesimus' occluded voice."¹⁰⁶ From a certain theological interpretative tradition, Johnson is right. God is the God of the poor; God is on the side of the oppressed and he suffers with them; God dwells in silence and he speaks through the silenced Other.¹⁰⁷ In this theological sense, in the case that concerns us here, God speaks through Onesimus' silence rather than through Paul. One certainly could counter argue such an understanding by pointing out that Paul is also poor, that he is old and that he is a prisoner in a Roman jail. But in terms of gradation in social standing, Paul is not a slave. Paul, at least, as he is rhetorically presented in this short letter, is surrounded by a group of supporters. He has someone who is writing for him (19); he can speak, and expects to be listened

to, he is confident that the recipient(s) of his correspondence will comply with what he orders and he is confident that a *paterfamilias* will obey him. It is obviously not so with Onesimus. He is utterly silent. Paul writes on his behalf, but Paul does not share his deafening silences.¹⁰⁸ God does, at least if one wants to allow such theological interpretation to have certain explanatory relevance.¹⁰⁹ Otherwise, what we are left with is another silent slave in antiquity. Moreover, theological interpretations may certainly not be enough to unravel the horror experienced by Onesimus who felt he had to flee from his master's control and whose body has been and continues to be the site of endless theological arguments. The arguments concerning the slave Onesimus have been the space for various tensions and nervousness on the part of readers not quite sure of what to do with this "ghostly" presence, or what to do with the interpretative legacy of this short correspondence from Paul.¹¹⁰

3.4 Conclusion

I wanted to accomplish a clear goal in this chapter: highlighting different slaves in relationship to Paul in order to reimagine their contextual particularities in some early Christ-groups. The interest was in the slaves—the figures of silence—and not in Paul. My first focus was on τῶν Χλόης in 1 Corinthians 1:11. The aim of that section was to engage in a social reimagination of the Christ-group in Corinth and reflect on certain issues they faced from the perspective of the slaves—especially from the standpoint of “those of Chloe.” Those of/belonging to/associated with Chloe, it was suggested, may have pushed Paul to address the situation of the slaves directly. However, although he might have had certain understanding of their societal positioning, he did not and seemingly could not do better than theologizing about their social situation. The focus then turned to Epaphroditus in the second half of the chapter. I highlighted his status as a body in motion and as one who experienced mental stress and trauma. Epaphroditus came across as one who had to resign himself to be a mere body of death bound to the service of others. The last slave I highlighted in relation to Paul was Onesimus. I argued that the convincing rhetoric Paul uses in sending the slave back to his master is not about the slave but about the masters (the Lord, Paul, and Philemon). Paul's rhetorical language in this memo functions to establish his own hierarchical position. Onesimus' silence may be interpreted theologically as evocative of God's silence and solidarity with the marginalized and the oppressed. If one takes the theological proposition that God speaks in and through the oppressed, then God's voice in the text is heard not through Paul, but through Onesimus' silence. However, the social forms and forces that have perpetrated the silencing of slaves in antiquity need further historical explorations that go beyond the theological. Paying attention to “words and things that construct history”¹¹¹ is important if one wants to develop ways of reading and understanding history “from below,” which may help us overcome some historical

silences. Finally, the voices that have been silenced, and the plight of other slaves in history who have been ostracized, brutalized, turned back to their masters to be branded, flogged or killed, on the basis of certain interpretations of Paul's short correspondence to Philemon—which attained the status of sacred scripture—is a traumatic historical legacy we all need to grapple with.

Notes

- 1 I am not interested in the meta-narrative of canonicity; hence my choice of chapter divisions by explicitly placing my chapter on Paul before the chapter on the gospels, and by exploring a variety of other ancient texts that fall outside the canon. The imperial use of "canon" and "Scripture" constitutes part of the galvanizing of power around imperial agendas. That manifests itself precisely around the insistence on literary and theological supremacy of some texts over others. See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).
- 2 *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon* (eds. Matthew V. Johnson, James A. Noel and Demetrius K. Williams; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 94.
- 3 Corinth had reputedly a large number of slaves and, thus, constituted a center of slave dealing. See T. E. Rihll, "Classical Athens," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 1, The Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds., Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 59.
- 4 Although a thorough review of the setting of 1 Corinthians would be helpful at this point, I will simply refer to a few studies that have influenced my thoughts on this particular letter. See John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTS 75; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992); Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, eds., *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, eds., *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society Biblical Literature, 2011).
- 5 See William Arnal, "Paul and the Corinthians," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* 80, 81; and Ronald Charles, *Paul and the Politics of Diaspora* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).
- 6 See among others Scott S. Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7: 21*; SBL Dissertation Series 11 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1973); Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), *Slavery in Texts and Interpretation* (ed. Allen D. Callahan, Richard A. Horsley and Abraham Smith; J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Mohr Siebeck, 1995; reprint 1998); Idem, "Paul and Slavery," in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 575–607; and Idem, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Fortress Press, 2006); Idem, "Slavery and Inhumanity: Keith Bradley's Legacy on Slavery in New Testament Studies," *Biblical Interpretation* 21 (2013): 506–514; John Byron, *Slave Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2nd Series, No. 162 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Idem, "Paul and the Background of Slavery: The *Status Quaestionis* in New Testament Scholarship," *CBR*

- 3.1 (2004): 116–139; John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery*. Recent Research in Biblical Studies, 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008); Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (paperback edition; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); Idem, “Slavery and the Rise of Christianity,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Volume 1, 456–481.
- 7 See Laura S. Nasrallah, “‘You were bought with a price’: Freedpersons and Things in Corinthians,” in *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality* (eds. Steven J. Friesen, Sarah James and Daniel N. Schowalter; New York: Brill, 2013), 54–73. Dale Martin’s work (*Slavery as Salvation*) belongs to this point as well, as he probes how non-Jews, Greeks and Romans living in cities of the first century may have heard metaphorical language of slavery in Paul.
- 8 On Chloe, see Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 92–94 (here 93): “Who were the Chloe’s people? ... Within the Pauline letters themselves the closest parallel would be groups of slaves addressed summarily (Rom. 16:10, 11; Phil. 4:22).” For Wayne A. Meeks, “‘Chloe’s people’ (*hoi Chloēs*, 1 Cor. 1:11) are slaves or freedmen or both who have brought news from Corinth to Ephesus.” See Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2nd ed., 2003), 59. For Gordon D. Fee, τῶν Χλόης “could be either family, slaves, or freedmen; there is no way to tell, although slaves or freedmen is more likely.” Fee, however, does not think that “those of Chloe” were members of the Corinthian community. Had they been members at Corinth, he argues, “they would most likely have been among those who ‘followed Paul.’ Yet Paul is not at all pleased by this slogan.” See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Revised Edition. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 55. On “Those of Chloe,” see also Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Reading Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters of Paul,” in *Women & Christian Origins* (ed. Ross S. Kraemer and Mary R. D’Angelo; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 200–202.
- 9 As Gerd Theissen rightly understands it, this oral report “sees things from below (1:26ff.; 11:20ff.).” See G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (ed. and trans. John Schuetz; Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 137. This “seeing things from below,” as articulated in the introduction, is where the interest of this project lies.
- 10 I am using “social imagination” in the sense developed by Charles Wright Mills in *The Social Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). The social imagination à la Mills allows a researcher to understand the intersectionality between, on the one hand, history, public records, public issues and/or larger social realities and, on the other hand, biography (social positions, personal values and experiences, cultural milieu affecting one’s understanding and one’s place in the world), with the view to thinking away from the customary and considering fresh, and even unexpected, social and political possibilities.
- 11 Anna C. Miller has convincingly argued that a focus on *ekklesia* as a democratic space in the first century allows one to understand not only Paul’s construction of his unique authority vis-à-vis those Christ-followers in Corinth but also the overall multiplicity of debates and tensions over gender and speech in this particular correspondence. See Anna C. Miller, *Corinthian Democracy: Democratic Discourse in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015).
- 12 “Master” is the slave owners’ point of view, and it presumes the success of the owners’ attempts at and practices of control. Historians of American slavery tend to use owner or slave owner or slaveholder instead of master, and reserve “master” for where the issue is the owner’s belief, perspective, assertions, etc.

- Slaves were treated as commodities, it is true, but there are places where it is not their status as commodities that is formative or relevant but their status as property.
- 13 My translation. One may also consider how the claim of being from a specific group might have been related to social status as well.
 - 14 If one accepts E. Fiorenza's reading that the expression "those of Chloe" means "the people or followers of Chloe" in Corinth, then one may suggest a "Chloe's party" as well. See Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 116.
 - 15 Richard Ascough typifies Paul's relationship with the Corinthians as one engaged in the founding of "an association around the cult of a hero." See Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism' and the Jesus Associations at Thessalonica and Corinth," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, 181.
 - 16 John K. Chow argues that competition among patrons was at the heart of the division in Corinth. See John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 1992. In this sense, the factions are about different patrons and clients and "those of Chloe" might be considered the social clients of a patroness named Chloe reporting to a patron or spiritual broker named Paul about what is happening in this assembly. Chow argues that some wealthy patrons have already absorbed Apollos into their client network and some of the social tensions that exist is a result of them opposing Paul or trying to absorb him as well into their network. Ibid., 106. John S. Kloppenborg proposes that "The analogy of other associations suggests, however, that internal conflict did not necessarily come from patrons; it could just as easily arise from the general membership." See Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, The *Ekklesia* at Corinth, and Conflict Management," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, 212. Thus, the conflicts in Corinth may have been caused by various social interests of the lower groups (slaves, clients, freed dependents). On conflict in Corinth see also Andrianjatovo Rakotoharintsifa, *Conflits à Corinthe. Église et société selon 1 Corinthiens. Analyse socio-historique* (Le Monde de la Bible 36; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1997).
 - 17 Corporal punishment was the primary distinctive feature that distinguished a free person/a slaveholder from a slave. Being vulnerable to be beaten was the lot of the enslaved persons, whose bodies were routinely subjected to chastisement. It is fair to state that because the slave by definition lacked physical integrity does not mean that slave x, y or z was beaten—only that that possibility was always present. The masters had, without legal constraints, the rights over the slave's life and body. The bodies of the masters/free citizens were, however, in principle, inviolable. The whip (*flagellum*), which symbolized the master's power, was the most frequently used instrument for punishment, although its usage was considered a harsh form of sentence. In addition to being subject to physical harm (to which Roman citizens were legally immune), slaves could only give legal testimony under torture. This demonstrates that not only were slaves subject to violence, they were also inherently untrustworthy and possessed of suspect motives. See among others Richard P. Saller, "Corporal punishment, authority, and obedience in the Roman household," in *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (ed. Beryl Rawson; Oxford: Clarendon Press; Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, 1991), 144–165; eadem, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 135; Ben Akrigg and Rob Tordoff, *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greek Comic Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 164–168.
 - 18 See Denny Burk, "Discerning Corinthian Slogans through Paul's Use of the Diatribe in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20," *BBR* 18.1 (2008): 99–121.

- 19 See Jennifer Glancy, "Obstacles to Slaves' Participation in the Corinthian Church," *JBL* 117.3 (1998).
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Keith Bradley estimates that "The ability to be sold was the slave's most compelling reminder of his status as sheer commodity." See Keith Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 52. This understanding regarding the fate of ancient slaves to be bought and sold as commodities is correct, but Katherine Shaner is right in reminding us of the complex and ambiguous positionalities of some ancient enslaved persons, who could "also enact transactions as buyers and sellers and engage with larger civic and religious institutions in the city." See Katherine A. Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (Atlanta, GA: Oxford University Press USA, 2018), 13.
- 22 This is, of course, historical conjecture. I am simply imagining various plausibilities with regard to the positionality of the slaves within their particular social reality.
- 23 See Antony Spawforth, "Roman Corinth: The Formation of a Colonial Elite," in *Roman Onomastics in the Greek East: Social and Political Aspects: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Finnish Institute and the Centre for Greek and Roman Antiquity, Athens, September 7–9, 1993* (eds. A. D. Rizakes, and A. D. Meletemata; Athens: Kentron Hellenikes kai Romaikes Archaioetetos Ethnikos Hidryma Ereunon, 1996), 167–182; see also Cavan W. Concannon, "When You Were Gentiles": *Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 56–63.
- 24 Benjamin W. Millis reports that "The city's burgeoning population was composed of a number of disparate groups, and the opportunity available in Corinth would have attracted people from a variety of economic and social backgrounds throughout the wider region, particularly from the Greek East." See Millis, "The Local Magistrates and Elite of Roman Corinth," in *Corinth in Contrast*, 38. Laura Nasrallah, in the same volume, mentions, "Some freedmen in Corinth monopolized high civic positions and thus the key city center of the Forum was marked by freedperson benefactions." See Nasrallah, "You were bought with a price," 61.
- 25 Millis again, "To the vast majority of people, the elite were part of a closed system that offered little to no hope of entrance" (Ibid, 50). Millis further adds, "Like most places in the empire and like Rome itself, Corinth was a city with an entrenched elite, in this case composed of men who happened to be freedmen, that was hostile to newcomers and that did its best to maintain a closed system" (Ibid, 53).
- 26 See Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians," in *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience* (ed. James Bernauer and Jeremy Carrette; London: Ashgate, 2004), 21. I concur wholeheartedly with Melanie Johnson-Debaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah when they state, "By centering on Paul rather than situating Paul among those to whom he wrote, ... [we] miss an opportunity to engage with true diversity and the multiple struggles concomitant with it." See Melanie Johnson-Debaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah, "Beyond the Heroic Paul: Toward a Feminist and Decolonizing Approach to the Letters of Paul," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes* (ed. Christopher D. Stanley; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 163.
- 27 E. S. Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 131. Fiorenza states that in 1 Corinthians, "Paul's rhetoric does not aim at fostering independence, freedom, and consensus,

- but stresses dependence on his model, order, and decency, as well as subordination and silence.” See Fiorenza, *Ibid.*, 121.
- 28 See Antoinette C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). If Wire's aim was to pay close attention to the significant role the women prophets play in Paul's rhetorical situation in 1 Corinthians, my aim is to learn from her methodology by focusing my attention on the particular place of the slaves in this narrative. In this entire project I am striving, as much as possible, to develop a methodology that allows voices traditionally silenced to be heard. I confront the overwhelmingly androcentric (and along with it slaveholders-centric) visions that such politics have produced in our scholarship. Thus, my project benefits from advances made by feminist scholars alongside those of other scholars who are reading texts “Other-wise,” with “suspicion” or “against the grain.”
 - 29 See Ernest Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). See also, David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters, and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 68–78.
 - 30 I concur with Stanley K. Stowers that “the choice of these people for baptism by Paul does not appear to be arbitrary (in spite of 1:17), because these are precisely those who are noted as sharers in Paul's specialist activities.” See Stowers, “Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians,” in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, 118.
 - 31 Paul refers to this behaviour according to human inclinations also in 3:4. Craig S. Keener attempts an explanation: “Paul's ‘merely human’ (3:4) probably plays on some philosophers' division of humanity into the mortal masses, on the one hand, and philosophers whose experience with the innate divine spark or with divine knowledge progressively divinizes them, on the other.” See Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*. The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40. Then, if one accepts Keener's interpretation, and moves the interpretation away from the author's theological concerns, Paul is clearly letting otherworldly, if not philosophical and mystical concerns, cloud his understanding of flesh and blood, nitty-gritty material and social realities.
 - 32 He does not use his self-designation title of “slave of Christ” (δοῦλος Χριστοῦ) to describe his positionality vis-à-vis the Corinthians, although this is a word he uses frequently to designate himself (e.g., Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Gal 1:10). The notion of slavery to God is present in the Pauline corpus, and enslavement to Christ is also an important aspect in Paul's lexicon (Rom 1:1; 6:22; 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; 1 Cor 4:1; 7:22; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:9).
 - 33 See William M. Cooper, *Flagellation and the Flagellants: A History of the Rod in all Countries from the earliest Period to the present Time* (London: William Reeves, 1870). One may accept the theological understanding that Paul here may be echoing Ps 89:32–33 “I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges (LXX, Ps. 88:33, ἐπισκέψομαι ἐν ῥάβδῳ τὰς ἀνομίας αὐτῶν καὶ ἐν μάστιγι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν); but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness.” See Robert E. Moses, *Practices of Power: Revisiting the Principalities and Powers in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 98.
 - 34 See Stephan J. Joubert, “Managing the Household: Paul as *Paterfamilias* of the Christian Household Group in Corinth,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (ed. P. Esler; New York: Routledge, 1995), 216–217.

- 35 Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 178.
- 36 See John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 139–140.
- 37 Musonius Rufus, a well-respected Roman and stoic philosopher of the first century, was probably expressing a common view when he states, “Every master is held to have it in his power to use his slave as he wishes” (*Discourse*, “On Sexual Indulgence,” 12.88). Cora B. Lutz, trans., “Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates,” *Yale Classical Studies* 10 (1947): 3–147 (87–89). See also the discussions by Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Ilaria Ramelli, “Transformations of the Household and Marriage Theory Between Neo-Stoicism, Middle Platonism, and Early Christianity,” *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 100.2–3 (2008): 369–396; and Valéry Laurand, *Stoïcisme et lien social: enquête autour de Musonius Rufus* (Paris: Garnier, 2014). Paul does not address the issue of the sexual availability of slaves to masters, although his ethical injunction regarding the sanctity of marriage may have turned some masters away from seeking sexual pleasures with their slaves (1 Cor 7:3–6).
- 38 Ernest-Bernard Allo, *Saint Paul: Première Épître de Paul aux Corinthiens* (Paris: Gabala, 1935), 117–120; Charles K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 121; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (trans., J. W. Leitch; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 96, note 24.
- 39 The concern for the ethical purity of the community is Paul’s primary concern, according to Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 43. See also Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991). Her argument is that Paul’s letter to the Corinthians is a unitary document with a deliberative rhetoric that urges the Corinthians to become unified.
- 40 Glancy, “Obstacles,” 492.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Henrik Mouritsen presents a much-nuanced understanding of manumission. According to him, manumission “was considered neither universal nor automatic”; it was “both very common and selective,” and, in the end, it was “more widespread in Rome than in any other slave society for which we have more detailed information.” See Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 139–141. The prospect of possible freedom through manumission encouraged most slaves to be obedient and to work even harder to please their masters. The institution of Roman manumission relied both on the slaveholder’s judicious judgment and on his patronal authority over the freedman, who was considered morally dependent. Thus the obedience of the slave, his conformity to the master’s will and, if ever manumitted, his relationship and integration to the world of freedom under the supervision of his patron/former master, were what characterized the complex relationships between slaves/freed slaves with masters/patrons.
- 43 Many slaves had no choice but to be a mere speaking tool at the service of masters because a life outside of slavery would be economically precarious.
- 44 I share J. Albert Harrill’s conclusion on this very difficult passage. See Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves*, 108–128.
- 45 Some poor in antiquity sold themselves to become slaves, or they leased themselves to masters as laborers and working in slave-like conditions, in order to survive. See Morris Silver, “Contractual Slavery in the Roman Economy,”

- Ancient History Bulletin* 25 (2011): 73–132. Jacques Ramin and Paul Veyne, “Droit romain et société: Les hommes libres qui passent pour esclaves et l’esclavage volontaire,” *Historia* 30 (1981): 472–497. Walter Scheidel also considers that “Genuine self-sales may arguably have occurred for the sake of upward mobility, with an eye to a career and later manumission,” although he estimates that “The quantitative weight of such events was probably minimal.” See Scheidel, “The Roman Slave Supply,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Volume 1, 300.
- 46 Paul, of course, speaks metaphorically. There is no such thing as Christ’s slave, like a temple’s slave.
- 47 Scott S. Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7: 21*, 140 (emphasis original).
- 48 See L. Nasrallah, “You were bought with a price,” 73.
- 49 Ilaria L. E. Ramelli discusses the possibility that for Paul slavery might have been an “indifferent thing.” She states, “If Paul embraced the Stoic view regarding slavery, it would follow that to his mind slavery was to be conceived as neither a good to be chosen, nor an evil to be avoided, since good is only virtue and what is related to it, and evil is only vice. It is moral enslavement to passions that is evil; juridical slavery is an *adiaphoron*. But it is an *adiaphoron* to be rejected if the opportunity presents itself, at least according to most common interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21–22.” See Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 114.
- 50 See Dale Martin’s presentation of the rhetoric of *homonoia* in *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 38–47. He considers 1 Corinthians as a *homonoia* letter, although Paul’s treatment of this particular rhetoric is, in Martin’s view, at odds with the dominant goal of *homonoia* speeches that solidifies the social hierarchy. I do not agree with Martin’s conclusion because one can argue that Paul also attempts to establish his own hierarchical position in his relationship with the Corinthians. One point I find interesting and worthy of further exploration is when Martin states: “Homonoia speeches regularly took the polis, which could stand for any social group, to be a body, and rebellion, factionalism, or discord (*stasis*) to be a disease.” *Ibid.*, 39. In this sense, the factions in the *ekklesia* in Corinth would be viruses that Paul’s rhetoric aimed at curing but he is also, or he may have also been perceived by some Corinthians to be, embroiled in the illness ravaging the body.
- 51 See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 46–50.
- 52 For example, some Corinthians did not trust him because his financial practices were not without problems (2 Cor 8–9; 11:7–11; 12:16), and some doubted his apostleship because he was operating without proper credentials (2 Cor 3:1–3; 13:3).
- 53 On Paul and commendation see Efrain Agosto, “Paul and Commendation,” in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*, ed. J. Paul Sampley (Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), 101–133. On Epaphroditus, and from a theological standpoint starkly different from the sociological description proposed here, see H. H. Drake Williams, III, “Honouring Epaphroditus: A Suffering and Faithful Servant Worthy of Admiration,” in *Paul and His Social Relations* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land; Leiden/Boston, 2013), 332–355. See my review of the volume in *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 44.4 (2014): 219–220.
- 54 Λειτουργίᾳ is the root word. The entry in Liddell and Scott suggests a range of meaning: serve public offices at one’s own cost; perform public duties, serve the

- state; serve a master; perform religious service, minister; performance of religious ritual; service, ministration and help; public service of the gods. See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1036.
- 55 J. Marchal, "Slaves as wo/men and unmen," in *The People Beside Paul: The Philippian Assembly and History from Below* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 170.
- 56 Peter Oakes estimates that "the economic situation of the Philippian Christians appears to have been particularly difficult, even by first-century standards." See P. Oakes, "The Economic Situation of the Philippian Christians," in *People Beside Paul*, 82. The membership in this Christ-adherent assembly was probably small—around 20, with women probably in the majority and some in leadership positions (e.g., Euodia and Syntyche, 4:2–3), alongside Roman craft workers, tenant farmers, former slaves and slaves. The group of Christ-followers at Philippi was similar to other ancient associations, whose membership included slaves, former slaves and the free poor. See Richard Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philipians and 1 Thessalonians*. WUNT 2/161 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Ancient associations were normally local organizations; they were relatively small groups (between 10 and 50 members), and only rarely did an association have more than 100 members. See John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); John S. Kloppenborg and Richard S. Ascough, *Achaia, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace, vol. 1 of Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, BZNW 181 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011). On Philippi and its people see in particular Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter*, SNTSMS 110 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Oakes, "The Economic Situation of the Philippian Christians," in *The People Beside Paul*, 63–82.
- 57 Ancient prisoners were dependent upon messengers and attendants for connection with the outside world and for survival. See Craig S. Warrink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonments*, JSNTSup 130 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 27–95. See also Richard J. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St Paul* (New York: Crossroad, 2001).
- 58 The financial donation to Paul could not have been substantial considering the economic predicament of the Christ assembly in Philippi. I am convinced by Peter Oakes' argument that "1 Thess 2:9 and Phil 4:15 provide strong evidence that Paul was both receiving money from the Philippians and still doing craftwork in order to provide basic sustenance. This suggests that the group of people in Philippi are providing less than [sic] the living requirements of one or two craftworkers. This is not an amount of money that gives any indication of substantial economic resources among the Philippian Christians." See Oakes, "The Economic Situation of the Philippian Christians," in *The People Beside Paul*, 76.
- 59 See Richard Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 124.
- 60 Peter Oakes proposes about 25 percent of the people in the city of Philippi were enslaved, whereas Craig S. de Vos estimates 68 percent of the population was either slaves (33 percent), or functioning as former slaves (35 percent). See Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter*, 48–50, 60–62; and C. S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities*. SBLDS 168 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 254–258.

- 61 However, as a counter argument, Paul may speak of Epaphroditus as a body in motion to be exchanged, which allowed the apostle to maintain the contact with the Philippians through space, but that does not mean Epaphroditus was definitely a slave, only that Paul talks about him using terms commonly applied to slaves. For a chapter that focuses on slaves on the move as part of the furnishings of street life in the ancient Roman world see Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves*, chapter 3 ("Slaves in the City Streets").
- 62 I am here paraphrasing Marchal, who puts it much more beautifully: "Epaphroditus functions merely as the instrument, routed between Paul and the audience, whose arrival and return Paul must carefully negotiate." See Marchal, "Slaves as wo/men and unmen," in *The People Beside Paul*, 174.
- 63 The usage of "liminal figure" to refer to Epaphroditus is in order to highlight the social ambiguity of this particular character.
- 64 Angela Standhartinger suggests, "It is possible that he was arrested when he delivered the money." See Standhartinger, "Letters from Prison as Hidden Transcript: What It Tells Us about the People at Philippi," in *The People Beside Paul*, 123. Her suggestion is a plausible one, although it is a possibility I cannot share totally. Indeed, Epaphroditus may have ended up being detained by the guards, who could have suspected him as a conspirator. However, her effort to link Epaphroditus to Epaphras (Philemon 23), a fellow prisoner to Paul, to justify such a rapprochement does not work, or, better, one does not have to entertain such hypothesis for the plausible detainment of Epaphroditus to make sense. While it may have been possible for a supporter of prisoners to bribe the generally cruel custodians, it was always risky to visit a prisoner and be there at his service. The risks associated with visiting and serving a prisoner in Roman custody, especially if one was a slave or a former slave who could be tortured for extracting further information on the activities and connections of the prisoner, were real. Also, as Standhartinger indicates, "A letter from a Roman public prison, written by a prisoner who was in the midst of a probably political, but in any case life-threatening legal procedure, was always risky." Ibid., 128. However, as stated above, I have my doubts Epaphroditus was put in detention. Paul does seem to have certain authority, or leeway, about sending him back to the community at Philippi, and such rhetoric of "sending back" would not be the appropriate language to use for a fellow prisoner under Roman authority. Thus my hesitation to consider Epaphroditus as having been imprisoned alongside Paul on his visit.
- 65 Imprisonment and shame went hand in hand in antiquity. See Brian M. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody* (The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 284–298.
- 66 Paul's "thankless thanks" is well analyzed in Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1897), 146.
- 67 Paul dreams of Christ as a heavenly hero who is going to have everything subjected to his heroic power (ὑποτάξει αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα), and who will transform the lowly bodies of the Philippians into glorious bodies similar to his (ὅς μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτόν, Phil 3:21). The strong, "masculine" body of the heavenly hero interacts with the humble, "feminine" bodies of the Christ-believers in Philippi with the view to transform their lowly bodies into glorious, military ones to be conformed to the image of Christ as the new emperor. The Christ-believers in Philippi, who are signified as conquered lowly

bodies within the Roman categorization, will become the conquerors under a new and heavenly emperor ready to exercise “masculine” power to go and to conquer as he is accompanied with the transformed and glorious bodies of heaven’s diasporic subjects.

- 68 Marchal, “Slaves as wo/men and unmen,” in *The People Beside Paul*, 170.
- 69 Ibid., 174.
- 70 In her response to Marchal’s chapter, Antoinette C. Wire, correctly, points out that “the difficulty of taking it [λειτουργός] as the sexual service of an enslaved or freed person is compounded by Paul’s usage when he says that Epaphroditus ‘came near to death for the work of Christ, risking his life in order to substitute for your inability to carry out the λειτουργία you owe me’” (2:30), in *The People Beside Paul*, 179.
- 71 On how Epaphroditus is rhetorically constructed in the letter see in particular Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition*, HTS 45 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998); and Joseph A. Marchal, *Hierarchy, Unity, and Imitation: A Feminist Rhetorical Analysis of Power Dynamics in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, Academia Biblica 24 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).
- 72 Marchal states, rightly, that “Paul’s description of Epaphroditus casts him in the role of the loyal and fearful (freed) slave, reflecting the kinds of natively alienate, semireassimilated, but still subordinate positions that was the slave’s in this context, a ‘member’ of a different kind of family, but still disposable for so many uses.” See Marchal, “Slaves as wo/men and unmen,” in *The People Beside Paul*, 171.
- 73 The use of fictive kinship language, however, does not mean the (freed) slave’s social status is transformed.
- 74 See Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Catherine M. Jones, “Theatre of Shame: The Impact of Paul’s Manual Labour on His Apostleship in Corinth.” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology, Fall 2013.
- 75 Psychological trauma damages a person’s ability to adequately deal with stress, and that can lead to acute stress disorder. A small number of scholars have studied the link between trauma in antiquity and trauma in the modern period. See in particular Menachem Ben-Ezra, “Traumatic Reactions from Antiquity to the 16th Century: was there a Common Denominator,” *Stress and Health* 27.3 (2011): 223–240. The author shows that several texts in antiquity contain clear depictions of literary characters and historical figures who are depicted as having suffered from psychological trauma as a result of being exposed to traumatic events. These traumatic events have affected these figures who have usually shown signs of somatic symptoms. See also Peter Meineck and David Konstan, eds., *Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). In this collection, the authors probe carefully how modern mental health concepts may help a reader understand trauma related to war in the ancient Greek texts.
- 76 On the conditions in ancient Roman prisons see especially Jens-Uwe Krause, *Gefängnisse im Römischen Reich*. Heidelberg althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 23 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996). This whole dire situation would have been highly traumatic for Epaphroditus who came to assist Paul.
- 77 Quoted in Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), 61 [G. Guex, *La Névrose d’abandon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 13]. See Fanon’s English translation, *Black Skin, White Masks* (trans. Charles Lam Markmann; New York: Grove Press, 1967), 73.

- 78 *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon*, eds. Matthew V. Johnson, James A. Noel and Demetrius K. Williams (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 94.
- 79 J. H. Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 7. Paul might have been in prison in Ephesus. See Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon*, 9–11. J. Albert Harrill proposes to consider Paul's letter to Philemon as a letter of recommendation on behalf of Onesimus to be considered as an apprenticed slave. The slave, who is now a different person by virtue of his conversion to Christ, could be trained to move beyond his perceived and ideological status of a "useless" slave to that of a "useful" one in the master's household: "Paul recommends Onesimus for apprenticeship in the service of the gospel, an explicit 'appeal'." See Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 15.
- 80 The proximity of slaves to mistress and the female appropriation of space in the absence of the *paterfamilias* is well attested in the Roman city of Pompeii, for example. See Ray Laurence, *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society*. 2nd ed. (London and New York, 2007). Laurence indicates that a well-to-do citizen would be outside the house for most of the day, thus creating "a gender division in space and time ... without the adult male presence of the *paterfamilias*." See Laurence, *Roman Pompeii*, 166. Generally, the *materfamilias* of the household was more able to witness the "daily rhythm of the domestic landscape." The master slaveholder, at his return home at the end of the day, tended to only see the effects of the slaves' daily activities: "swept floors, polished silver, prepared meals, arranged dining rooms, warmed bath, and so on." So to the slaveholder "as long as the day's work was carried out as he had ordered" the slaves are "useful" and they are invisible. The above quoted materials are from Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves*, 70. Thus, Aphia then needed to be included as a primary recipient of the letter since "she also had to give her opinions when the question of taking back a runaway slave was raised." See Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robbert J. Karris; ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 190. Hence, "the sister" also needed to be convinced by Paul's arguments, but it is to Philemon, as the head of the household, that Paul addresses his letter. Philemon along with Aphia, and possibly Archippus (v. 1), are positioned as the leaders of this meeting house that was located possibly in Colossae (12 miles southeast of Laodicea in the south of the province of Asia).
- 81 Paul refers to the fact that he is an old man and, as such, one may interpret that as meaning that he is no longer ready or physically capable of engaging in heated, passionate and overtly hostile discussions or disputes.
- 82 See Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 89. Flight was an act of defiance and protest for slaves. See Keith Bradley, "Resisting Slavery at Rome," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Vol. 1, 362–384. Onesimus might have sought refuge from his owner because of abuse and he could have hoped that Paul (his owner's friend, *amicus domini*) could mediate legally about his case. Paul would be then responsible for any financial loss to the slave owner due to the loss of a speaking tool. See Alan Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 49–60.
- 83 Jeremy Punt makes the interesting suggestion that "In addition to the family metaphors that Paul used to establish his authority over Philemon, Paul also employed other devices such as punning on 'useless/useful' (Phlm 11) which implies Paul's claim to have been more successful than Philemon in soliciting

- productivity from Onesimus.” See Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation: Reframing Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 166. Jennifer Glancy argues that the recipients of the letter would have understood ἀρχηστος to mean “disposable,” and “expendable.” Glancy, “The Utility of an Apostle: On Philemon 11,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 5.1 (2015): 72–86. See also Christine Berger, “Onesimus der Nützliche. Sklaverei in der Welt des Paulus,” in *La lettre à Philémon et l’ecclésiologie Paulinienne/Philemon and Pauline Ecclesiology*. Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum; SMBen.BE 17 22 (ed. Daniel Marguerat; Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 75–106. I thank Professor Berger for sharing her article and for pointing out this collection to me. Unfortunately, I could not engage with the book because of becoming aware of it in the later stage of my research.
- 84 Norman R. Petersen estimates that “Onesimus’s action ... poses a threat both to the institutionalized social system and to the social structures it serves.” See Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul’s Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 94.
 - 85 See Michelle George, “Slavery and Roman Material Culture,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*: Volume 1, 391.
 - 86 The Corinthians, for example, were “clearly unable to break the social conventions in this context and that the best solution Paul can imagine is that all should eat their own meals at home before they gathered (1 Cor 11. 17–34).” See J. M. G. Barclay, “Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 179. On the possibility for slaves to practice, within some limits, other religions than that of their masters see J. Albert Harrill, “The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms,” in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 236–239.
 - 87 One may recall *The Sentences of the Syriac Menander*, especially sentence 161: “God hates a bad slave.” Running away was also considered by slaveholders to be the mark of the bad slave. The stereotypical bad slaves (lazy, idle, stupid and running away) are mentioned in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (2.5.5; 2.10.1–2; 3.13.4).
 - 88 The portrayal of a good, obedient and faithful slave is often, if not always, a coping mechanism on the part of the slave because of fear of punishment from the masters. See Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, 1987, 39; Sandra R. Joshel, “Slavery and Roman Literature,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*: Volume 1, 216–223.
 - 89 Also, probably, Paul does not want to be accused of theft of the property of another person because anyone who received a runaway slave (*fugitivus*) could stand accused of such unlawful act (*Digest* 47.2.1).
 - 90 See Andrew Wilson, “The Pragmatics of Politeness and Pauline Epistolography: A Case Study of the Letter of Philemon,” *JSNT* 48 (1992): 107–119. See also Scott S. Elliott, “‘Thanks, but no Thanks’: Tact, Persuasion, and the Negotiation of Power in Paul’s Letter to Philemon,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 51–64, here 54. The author’s argument is that Paul’s rhetorical maneuvering serves to maintain “his authoritative position vis-à-vis Philemon, namely, by refusing to be obligated to Philemon as a client even while allowing Philemon to save face in front of the assembly at his house.”
 - 91 Although one may not want to follow Joseph A. Marchal’s argument all the way, one may observe that the language in Philemon indeed contains few homoerotic nuances in the way Paul talks about Onesimus and as he describes passing him off to Philemon. See Joseph A. Marchal, “The Usefulness of an Onesimus: The Sexual Use of Slaves and Paul’s Letter to Philemon,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 373–395.

- 92 The slave's legal personality merged with that of the master. This has, however, implications in contract law but not in criminal law. Although the slave could carry out legally binding transactions, the slave could not be substituted for the master in case of criminal convictions. If the master wanted to put his slave available to a third party, he needed to do so in forms (sale, lease, loan, etc.). See Jean-Jacques Aubert, *Business Managers in Ancient Rome: A Social and Economic Study of Institores, 200 BC-AD 250* (Brill: Leiden, 1994), 40–116. Referring to Pliny's construction of slave agency, Sandra R. Joshel indicates that, "In paternalistic discourse, slaves must have agency, yet their personhood must also be so transparent that they serve as blank screens onto which the master projects himself: their hair is his hair; their interests, his interests; their feelings, his feelings; their dreams, his dreams. There is no opposition, then, between slave as object and slave as human: rather, at the moment that the slave becomes visible as person, it is because he/she is most useful to the writer's discourse." See Joshel, "Slavery and Roman Literary Culture," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Vol. 1, 237. Extrapolating from that thought one may indicate that Paul's paternalistic discourse vis-à-vis Onesimus is constructed in a way to highlight the slave's usefulness to him and to Philemon. Onesimus' very personhood functions through his usefulness as a diligent brother/slave/thing that can be owned and transferred. Therefore, I cannot agree with Peter T. O'Brien's sociologically un-nuanced appraisal of the situation where theology seems to trump social realities when he states, "The relationship between the two men [Philemon and Onesimus] is deepened, so that the terms 'slave' and 'master' are transcended. And although Onesimus' earthly freedom may be of positive value, finally it is of no ultimate significance to him as a Christian as to whether he is slave or free. In the end what matters is to have accepted God's call and to follow him." See Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*. World Biblical Commentary 44 (Waco, Texas: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 270. A similar theological conclusion, although slightly more nuanced, is expressed in Richard Lehmann, *Épître à Philémon. Le Christianisme primitif et l'esclavage* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1978). For Lehmann, Paul is not immediately preoccupied to either create a new social order or to be in conformity with the world as it is. Through his conversion, Onesimus' relationship to his master and to his own self are situated beyond the juridical system and economic structures of the present social order and are expressed "in Christ." Through his conversion, Onesimus becomes part of an eschatological community where love and true freedom are constituted/renewed by means of brotherly rapport with one and another.
- 93 J. Albert Harrill states, rightly, that the letter "did not so much proclaim Messiah Jesus as discuss a private business transaction about a slave." See Harrill, *Paul the Apostle: His Life and Legacy in Their Roman Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 18.
- 94 Certainly one may interpret this theologically, that is, in the sense that Philemon owes his spiritual life to Paul who preached to him and he converted to the gospel of Christ. However, one may also develop a historical and social imagination that allows considering Paul's statement differently. Maybe Paul is alluding to an event the whole assembly knows about, or to an episode they may have heard about, and he reminds Philemon of that particular circumstance. I advance this possibility in order to move away from the too theological treatment of this statement, and consider the flesh-and-blood social actors involved in the honour and shame process that is being deployed through Paul's rhetoric.
- 95 On the public character of the letter see in particular U. Wickert, "Der Philemonbrief—Privatbrief oder apostolisches Schreiben?," *ZNW* 52 (1961): 230–238.

- 96 See Chris Frilingos, "‘For My Child, Onesimus’: Paul and Domestic Power in Philemon," *JBL* 119.1 (2000): 91–104. Frilingos notes that Paul positions himself as the affectionate and commanding father and thus fulfills and assumes the *paterfamilias* role with authority over both the slave holder—who no longer has the legal right to decide the fate of his property—and the slave. In this sense, Paul assures his patronage over both.
- 97 I do not see any evidence in the letter that Onesimus was to carry the letter prior to Paul’s eventual release from prison and visit to Philemon.
- 98 Sandra R. Joshel states, "The runaway dramatically demonstrates an independence of will, disloyalty, lack of devotion, and bad service. Importantly, too, he is guilty of stealing the slave owner’s property—himself!" See Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 118.
- 99 Running away was, according to Keith Bradley, "one of the most prevalent but hazardous forms of slave resistance in the Roman world" and "the actions of those who undertook it stand as an eloquent statement on the harshness of the institution they wished to flee, and on the motivating force of the will to reject slavery." See Bradley, "Resisting Slavery at Rome," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*: Volume 1, 373.
- 100 A slave who fled from the domain of his master in antiquity was constantly threatened and could be captured and returned to his master at any point. The authorities were at the service of the master in capturing any runaway slave. In fact, a specific group of Romans called *Fugitivarii* made it their profession to identify and catch runaway slaves in order to return them to their masters—often for the runaway slave(s) to face the death penalty after having been branded on the face or the forehead with the letter "F" (Fur-thief, Fug-fugitive, runaway). Petronius, for example, has a character in his *Satyricon* (103) say this: "Eumolpus covered both our foreheads with huge letters and wrote with a rough hand the stigmatic mark of runaway slaves all over our faces." See among others Christopher P. Jones, "Stigma: Tattooing and branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *JRS* 77 (1987): 139–155.
- 101 Maybe that might have implied for Onesimus not to face the death penalty upon his return or branded on the face or the forehead as a fugitive.
- 102 There are interpretations of Onesimus’ new status both "in the flesh" and "in the Lord" that point to an emancipation of Onesimus. See, in particular, Allen D. Callahan, "Paul’s Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative Argumentum," *HTR* 86 (1993): 357–376, and Callahan, *Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997). Callahan goes so far as to argue, in what remains unconvincing to most scholars, that Onesimus was not a slave, but Philemon’s estranged actual brother. See also Demetrius K. Williams, "'No Longer as a Slave': Reading the Interpretation History of Paul’s Epistle to Philemon," in *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon* (eds. Matthew V. Johnson, James A. Noel and Demetrius K. Williams; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012). Demetrius places Onesimus at the center of his discussions, and he finds in the slave a beloved Christian brother who is situated at the margins of the biblical interpretative traditions with whom he can sympathize by means of a liberating reading of the text.
- 103 Elisabeth S. Fiorenza notes, "The kyriarchal household pattern conceives not only of family, but also of church and state in terms of the patriarchal household. The Christian community soon comes to be called 'the household of God', and G*d is understood as *Herr* (*kyrios* = slavemaster) and father in analogy to the great kings of the ancient Near-East and the Roman emperors who, from the

- time of Augustus, were understood as the *pater patriae*.” See Fiorenza, “Slave Wo/Men and Freedom: Some Methodological Reflections,” in *Postcolonial Interventions: Essays in Honor of R. S. Sugirtharajah* (ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 127.
- 104 In their introduction to the volume of *Onesimus Our Brother*, Matthew Johnson, James Noel and Demetrius Williams argue, rightly, that in the long history of interpretation of Paul’s letter to Philemon the center of attention has usually been either Paul (in most cases) or Philemon: “Rarely, if at all, has the other central figure, regarding whom and about whom the letter was written—Onesimus—stepped out of the background. He has been mentioned, discussed, referenced; subtly present, but voiceless, powerless, hidden in the shadows and without agency.” See *Onesimus Our Brother*, 1.
- 105 Matthew V. Johnson, “Onesimus Speaks: Diagnosing the Hys/Terror of the Text,” in *Onesimus Our Brother*, 95.
- 106 Ibid., 94.
- 107 This is the premise that informed most of the theologians working/ministering within the Liberation Theology movement. One of the earliest and most influential books on liberation theology is by Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación: perspectivas* (1971) (trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, rev. ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). See also, *In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez* (ed. Michael Griffin and Jennie Weiss Block; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013). This type of emphasis on oppression and on God’s positioning with the marginalized is also highlighted in the works of many theologians who have articulated the concerns and the sufferings of blacks in the United States. See the works of James H. Cone, and in particular, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippencott, 1970), and *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).
- 108 J. Albert Harrill states, “Paul considers Onesimus’s wishes to be unimportant, at least not important enough to mention to Philemon. The idea that Onesimus wanted any other life than working for Paul seems an unthinkable proposition in the letter.” See J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 16.
- 109 As I reflect on this sentence, I understand the malaise a social historian, who is simply interested in human social activities, might have. I raise this theological interpretation simply to offer a contrastive reading to a social historical approach, but my overall approach remains that of a social historian.
- 110 Some may argue that Paul’s words should be an incentive in showing leniency towards runaway slaves, but that particular interpretation is only one way this text has been interpreted. See J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, especially chapter 7, “The use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy,” 165–192; Demetrius K. Williams, “‘No Longer as a Slave’: Reading the Interpretation History of Paul’s Epistle to Philemon,” in *Onesimus Our Brother*, 11–45.
- 111 See Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves*, 70.

SLAVES IN THE GOSPELS

Our ancestors always suspected the temper of their slaves, even when they were born on the same estates, or in the same houses with themselves and thus inherited from their birth an affection for their masters. But now that we have in our households nations with different customs to our own, with a foreign worship or none at all, it is only by terror you can hold in such a motley rabble.¹

I no longer call you slaves, because the slave does not know what his master does, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my father.²

This chapter focuses on two slaves in the gospel narratives, namely, on one female slave of the high priest, “a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off” (John 18:26; see also Mark 14:66, Matthew 26:69, and Luke 22:56), and Malchus, the slave of the high priest who had been struck by one of Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; and John 18:10).³ The gospels mention other slaves, but they are usually characters in parables,⁴ or are only talked about (e.g., the Centurion’s slave, in Luke 7:1–10). The emphasis on the slaves highlighted in this chapter is because they are not parabolic slaves; they are, in a sense, present and/or tangible in the narratives. Unlike most slaves of the gospels, one slave is named and the female slave is given words. However, they are made to be insignificant figures, as one slave’s voice is made incomprehensible, whilst the body of the other is violated. These two slaves illustrate the key themes of this monograph: slaves’ bodies are vulnerable and disposable, and the voices of slaves are of no real interest or value. The presumptiveness of these assumptions lies at the core of the myth-making process of thinkers and theologians of the early Jesus movement, who were concerned with social, political, and theological visions that had no intrinsic interest in slaves, regardless of whether these slaves were part of the movement.

The plan of the chapter is to begin with a generic survey of the slaves in the four gospels, and then focus on the story of Peter and the slave woman. The initial survey will highlight the deeper reading as the natural outgrowth, which will reinforce its value-added. Then, I will consider how the female

slave who questioned Peter at Jesus' arrest has been treated in the gospel narratives. I propose to read the various representations of the slaves in the high priest's courtyard who accuse Peter of being with Jesus, as the development of one character, the female slave. As we move from one gospel to the next, the gospel writers alter the identity of that particular character in order to exonerate and rehabilitate Peter's image and memory. Finally, I will demonstrate how the link between that female slave and Malchus is important, and how that bond makes the questions posed by the female slave all the more significant.

4.1 (Re)imagining the slaves in the gospels

What I will do now is what I consider a (re)imagining exercise. (Re)imagining the slaves in the gospels means seeking them out in the shadows of the texts and bringing them to light in order for their presence, frequently made absent, and their often muted voices, to be allowed to problematize the pictures of how they were dealt with in the rise of the earliest Christ-groups. (Re)imagining the slaves in the gospels presupposes reading the gospel narratives differently, from below, against the grain, and with an "eye on that which was missing in previous analyses."⁵ It means not only highlighting the slaves to make them visible and relevant in these texts, but also this exercise encourages one to question the narratives in light of the enslaved characters in them. In other words, what can be read differently and how the act of reading these constructed texts can be enhanced by letting slaves be subjects with voices and concerns that need to be heard and paid attention to, rather than objects of parabolic lessons.⁶

The exercise of (re)imagining the slaves means recognizing the tension in the gospels between the prevailing culture that values the interests and viewpoints of slaveholders and the stifled voice and perspectives of those at the service of others. Both pictures are presented.⁷ One cannot simply state that the social elite's position is the only perspective put forward, although it is overwhelmingly present in these narratives produced by non-elite writers, editors, and communities. The few bold moves allowed to slaves in the gospels and the possibility, or the invitation, of becoming one like them and perhaps protesting the oppression and exploitation they were under, also weaves itself through the texts, although very timidly to the point of being difficult for a reader/hearer to notice the challenges.

I will conduct a quick survey of the slaves in each of the gospels in order to show how they are usually presented. Then I will pay attention to the episode of Peter's encounter with the female slave and the wounding of Malchus, the high priest's slave.

Slaves in Mark

There are few specific references to slaves in Mark. The first is Mark 10:44: "Whoever would want to be first among you must be a slave to all (πάντων

δοῦλος),” which corresponds to Mark 9:35: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and serve all (καὶ πάντων διάκονος)”. The theological reasoning behind these verses is that the disciples should not try to discern who is the greatest or lord over others, but should consider service to others as a mark of greatness, because Jesus came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45).

Mark 12:2–5 refers to slaves in the context of a parable. Their fate is violence and death from the hands of tenants, who had no regard for an absentee vineyard owner.⁸ The other reference to slaves in Mark is in 13:34–37, which describes slaves in the context of what they are expected to do, or how they are expected to behave if an owner leaves home and puts his slaves in charge of guarding the place, each with their own responsibility. The text assumes as a matter of fact that the slave doorkeeper needs always to be on guard and awake, ready to welcome the master whenever he comes back (“in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn,” Mark 13:35). The theological lesson is that those who are expecting the “Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory” (13:26) should be awake and ready for his return at any time.⁹ The last specific references to slaves are in Mark 14:66–70, which I will review in greater detail below.

Slaves in Matthew

The references to slaves in Matthew are more numerous than in Mark, mostly because of the parabolic slaves.¹⁰ The first mention of a slave is in 8:6, referring to a master (a Roman centurion) whose “boy” (ὁ παῖς μου), or special “pet slave” (that is, corresponding to an affective relation of the master to the slave), is terribly sick.¹¹ His request to Jesus to heal his παῖς from afar has been met, “and the slave was healed in that hour” (καὶ ἰάθη ὁ παῖς ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, 8:13). In the Matthean parables, the slaves do their work and clean up (13:27–30); slaves cannot rest at night so that they may be ready to welcome and to serve whenever their absent slaveholder comes back (13:35–36). Slaves can be used as exemplary figures, e.g. the slave who is ungrateful to his master and unforgiving to his fellow slaves (18:25–34), and the unmerciful slave is turned over to his torturers (τοῖς βασανισταῖς) until he repays what he owes his master (18:34).¹² The trope of becoming a slave to all and its use as a mark of greatness is repeated in Matthew 20:27: “Whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave.” The other parables mentioning slaves assume the vulnerability of their bodies; they are routinely seized, disrespected, beaten, mistreated and killed (21:35–36; 22:3; 22:6–10). The only time the slaves are deemed “blessed” is when the absentee master finds them doing their work of well managing their master’s household in taking care of everything and everyone when he comes back (24:46). But “wicked” is the slave who slacks in his work, beats his fellow slaves and lives a life of debauchery in his master’s absence, “the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know. He will cut him in pieces and put

him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (24:50–51).¹³ The perspective of the master is what counts, and it is the master’s right to receive profits from the labor of his slaves as he goes away on a journey and distributing different amount of money to his slaves (25:14–28).¹⁴

Slaves in Luke

The slaves are presented in a formulaic manner in Luke. The story of the Roman centurion who had a sick slave is also mentioned in Luke 7:2. This time, the slave is described as a δοῦλος who was valued by, or was valuable to (ἐντιμος), his master. A slave who is alert and ready to receive an absentee master, and whose master finds at work when he comes back, is deemed to be blessed (12:37, 43). However, “that slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating” (12:47–48). The slave is expected to do the will of the master so that the master might not lose his reputation (14:21–23). The slave assures a wayward young man who comes back home to his father is properly restored to his honourable role as son (15:22–23), and the same slave provides the news of what is happening inside the house to another son who refuses to join in the celebration of the return of the prodigal son (15:26). A freed slave who works as a household manager (οἰκονόμος) for his master still fears him because he was charged of squandering his master’s money (16:2).¹⁵ His example as a shrewd person who knows how to manage life’s circumstances to retain friends within the social system by means of lowering their debts to the master is commended (16:8–9).¹⁶ No slave is estimated to be able to serve two masters at once, “for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other” (16:13). Slaves are expected to treat and serve a master well regardless of their own exhaustion (17:7–9).¹⁷ A slaveholder is identified as a harsh king who expects his slaves to be successful financial agents to increase his wealth while he goes away on a journey (19:12–27).¹⁸ When Luke has the opportunity to use the position of a slave as an exemplar for one who wants to become the greatest, as stated in Mark and Matthew, he instead uses the following: “become the youngest, and the leader like one who serves” (γινέσθω ὡς ὁ νεώτερος καὶ ὁ ἡγούμενος ὡς ὁ διακονῶν, 22:26).¹⁹

Slaves in John

One may presume that those helping at the wedding in Cana of Galilee may have been slaves. Jesus’ mother told those serving (τοῖς διακόνοις) to do whatever Jesus tells them (John 2:5). However, there are only two specific references to slaves in John. In John 15:15, Jesus tells his disciples that he now calls them friends because he has made known everything he heard from the father to them, and that he will no longer call them slaves because the slave

does not know what the master does (οὐκέτι λέγω ὑμᾶς δούλους, ὅτι ὁ δοῦλος οὐκ οἶδεν τί ποιεῖ αὐτοῦ ὁ κύριος).²⁰ The second reference is in John 18:10 and following, which I will consider later.

Summary

The gospels describe Jesus as one who associated with outcasts and the vulnerable, but they also depict him as one who relied on a normative portrayal of the slave in antiquity to illustrate his teachings. Slaves are used for theological purposes with regard to lowliness and faithfulness. They are used in the parables from the perspective of the masters, as insults, beatings, torture and death are ordinary components of their lives. Slaves are considered “blessed” when they do the work expected of them, and thus, slaves should be in a constant state of readiness to serve their masters. Most of the master-slave parables are narrated within the context of the *Parousia* with the believers faithfully waiting—or encouraged to be ready at any moment—for the return of the divine Master. Although there are few instances when one could see slaves being taken as example for humility, the interest is never in them as flesh and blood human beings experiencing and trying to negotiate often-harsh social realities of exploitation and violence.²¹ Instead, they are “represented as bodies outside the game of honor.”²² The gospels reinforce the institution and the ideology of ancient slavery by putting slaves in their place as chattel in bondage, which are susceptible to physical and sexual violation for the pleasure of slaveholders who control them, exploit them, extract their service for personal comfort, reward them, and have them beaten and killed as surrogates and vulnerable bodies. From Mark to John, the presence and the voice of slaves have been well managed. By the time we get to John, fewer references are made about slaves—although John does name the slave Malchus and retains the wonderment of the female slave at the door—the trope of slavery used by the gospels’ writers and editors reflects the ideology of slavery in the early Roman Empire.²³ The overall portrayal of slaves in the gospels corresponds well to Sandra R. Joshel’s assessment of slaves in Roman literature: “The stories of slaves in Roman literature tell us a great deal about their owners. They voice slaveholders’ aspirations for their slaves: what they wanted, what they feared, and what they got. They provide sets of qualities defining the good slave—and castigating the bad slave. From this point of view, the slaves themselves emerge as stock figures; literature tells us something about their lives, but little of their experience.”²⁴

4.2 Focus on particular slave characters in the gospels

The unnamed female slave of the high priest

Let us now consider the unnamed female slave who questioned Peter after Jesus was taken. The gospel texts vary in their level of nuance. I will examine

the narratives starting with Mark, then Matthew, Luke, and John, in order to analyze how the authors portrayed this slave to suit their own purposes.

Mark

In Mark 14:66–68 we read, “While Peter was below in the courtyard, *one of the slave maids of the high priest* came by. When *she* saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.’ But he denied it, saying, ‘I do not know nor *understand what you are talking about.*’” This female slave is nameless; her identity is tied to her function as one female slave (παιδίσκη) among others,²⁵ and in being the possession of the high priest. The Greek verbs used to describe her are active verbs expressing motion. She came by (ἔρχεται) with the intent to truly see (ἐμβλέψασα, of having an intense look at/of staring at) Peter. The slave woman talks directly and authoritatively to the one she accuses (λέγει, Καὶ σὺ μετὰ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ ἦσθα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 14:67).

Although she is nameless in the narrative, her association with a powerful household seems to give her leverage. The presence of a female slave staring at, speaking to, and cross-examining an important male disciple is intriguing, especially when one considers that the references to slaves in the gospels (whether parabolic or otherwise) are usually to males. Peter becomes the subject of the female slave’s intense gaze; she is a slave who purposefully and correctly identifies him: “*You* were also with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.” Under her gaze, Peter becomes like a slave; someone who is scrutinized under the intense gaze of a stranger, someone associated with a particular figure or master. In stating that Peter was with Jesus of Nazareth, she implies that Peter is a friend or a follower/student/disciple of a troublemaker from Nazareth, a place from where nothing good could come.²⁶

Looking at the situation from a theological dimension, the female slave clearly identifies Peter as being one of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, and, in her own way, offers him the opportunity to enter into communion with his master. She gives him the chance to accept wholeheartedly the charge or the option of coming out of hiding to declare his faith in Jesus publicly, and to embrace belonging to Jesus by taking his cross as well. Peter, however, refuses to see that the way of the cross is compatible with his own recognition of Jesus: “I do not know or *understand what you are talking about.*” Peter not only denies that he knows Jesus; the text goes further, stating that he does not even understand (οὔτε ἐπίσταμαι) what she is talking about.²⁷ Peter dismisses the female slave as someone who is talking nonsense or as someone who is mad. By responding to the παιδίσκη in this way, Peter shrugs off his slave mantle and puts the woman in her place, categorizing her as a slave, someone who is illogical and spewing incomprehensible nonsense. Despite Peter’s efforts to dismiss her, the tension remains in the text: one may wonder who of the two is acting like a slave. Is it the bold

female maid on the offensive, or is it Peter who denies, in shame and in fear, that he is truly a follower of Jesus?

The female slave appears once again in the scene; however, this time she does not address him directly, but declares to the crowd of bystanders, “*This one* is one of them” (Mark 14:69). The shift from “you” to “this one” is reminiscent of the baptism scene of Jesus as depicted in Mark and Matthew. Mark 1:11 reads: “You are my son, the beloved, in you I am well pleased.” The voice from heaven in that scene addresses Jesus directly to show intimacy between God and Jesus, and to demonstrate that God is pleased with his obedience. Contrary to Mark, in Matthew 3:17 we have a public declaration stemming from heaven with the aim to vindicate Jesus before all, as the son who pleases God: “This is my son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased.”

With regard to the issue of the voice of the παιδίσκη in relation to Peter, the rendering in Mark can be read first as a private accusation, albeit done in a public space. Then, the voice of the παιδίσκη becomes a public verdict. In both instances, the voice of the slave woman is clear and her message is accurate. When Jesus was baptized, the message from heaven was also clear for the one being addressed and, in Mark’s understanding, theologically accurate. In a parallel manner, a theological reading may consider the slave maid as God’s voice offering to Peter the choice of partaking in Jesus’ excruciating crucifixion.

The παιδίσκη comes to disturb Peter in his state of being with her probing gaze and her declarative statement, placing him in a state of disequilibrium. His effort to characterize her as one who is speaking nonsense—as a female slave who could not possibly know what she was talking about—does not seem to go anywhere. This made Peter lose his self-control (σωφροσύνη), a character trait believed in antiquity to be possessed particularly by a man and a free individual,²⁸ and caused him to curse and swear (Mark 14:68–71). Thus, what we have in Mark’s text is the picture of an authoritative slave woman, who is associated with the high priest, and who pursues and ultimately overwhelms Peter with her accusations, before he denies Jesus.

Matthew

The text of Matthew differs from Mark in important ways. In Matthew’s appropriation of the pericope, the author keeps some redactional features from Mark and adds other layers to the story. Matthew 26:69–71 reads: “Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. *A slave woman* (μία παιδίσκη) came to him and said, ‘You also were with Jesus the Galilean.’ But he denied it before all of them, ‘I do not know what you are talking about.’ When he went out to the porch, *another slave woman* (ἄλλη) saw him, and she said to the bystanders, ‘This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ Again, he denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the man.’” The first important observation to note is that in Matthew there are two maidservants; the παιδίσκη who confronted Peter twice in Mark is, in Matthew, split into two. Some of

the questions one may ask are: Why would there be two slave women in Matthew but only one in Mark? Does that suggest confusion over what happened, or is it an example of fabrication on the part of the Matthean author/editor/redactor with the view to discredit the tale? I am proposing that Matthew is redacting the story for his own ideological and theological perspectives. Both women are nameless, and no connection to a specific household is given.

In this narrative, the slaves have lost everything that makes them intriguing or interesting. Matthew retains the uncomfortable memory of Peter cursing and swearing when he denies Jesus, but he diverges slightly from Mark by presenting not one daring and gazing παιδίσκη, but two female slaves, each putting Peter in a delicate position. Matthew does not submit Peter to the intense gaze and examination of a female slave. Peter appears more composed in this text. He simply sits outside, with no specification as to where exactly he was sitting, as opposed to the text of Mark: "Peter was below in the courtyard." When the first slave woman came to him, she instantly declared to him that he was with Jesus, the Galilean (the reference to Nazareth is dropped). Peter denied this woman's claim before everyone, which is a detail that is not highlighted in Mark. In Mark, Peter seems to be cornered by the slave maid, as he behaves fearfully when confronted by that slave woman. Matthew, on the other hand, seems to present Peter's case in an understandable and more sympathetic way by adding this detail of the crowd,²⁹ namely, that Peter reacted thus because he is exposed in front of a crowd and did not want to risk his life at this particular juncture. Thus, the focus is on Peter and on his emotional state rather than on the slave woman. One may also notice that in Matthew Peter simply says: "I do not know what you are talking about." There is no mention that Peter does not *understand* what the woman is talking about, merely that he has no knowledge of what she is talking about. The slave in Matthew does not speak nonsense that Peter does not or cannot understand, rather, Peter seems to understand exactly what the slave woman is talking about, but he declares that he does not know what she is referring to.

Matthew does not allow the reader to engage in any interpretative dialectic with what it means to be a slave. The nameless maid is clearly a slave with nothing threatening about her. Her association with a powerful household does not matter, nor does how she knew Peter was with Jesus. Matthew's Peter is not held under the scrutiny of a slave woman at any point. She declares he was with Jesus and he denies it matter-of-factly. For Matthew, it is as if the mention of only one slave is not enough in his appropriation and editing of the story from Mark. After that first encounter, the other παιδίσκη who saw him said, not directly to Peter but to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth" (26:71). Again, Peter denied it, but this time with an oath (26:72). When the bystanders confronted Peter later on, claiming that his accent exposes him as a student of Jesus, Peter began to curse and swear

(26:73–74). Matthew has the second slave woman see Peter, but she does not speak to him directly, preferring instead to make her declaration solely to the bystanders. Gradually, Matthew distances Peter from the slaves. If the scene in Mark is intense, with Peter standing one-on-one with the scrutinizing and accusatory slave maid, the scenes in Matthew seem to increasingly detach Peter from the slave figure(s) and place him as an individual facing an angry mob. Peter’s answer to the bystanders is similar to what we have seen in the other scenes in Mark, but now his answer appears more logical in this specific context: “I do not know the man.” It is not clear why Matthew keeps the words “Jesus of Nazareth” in the slave’s mouth, nor why he has Peter simply state: “I do not know the man” (26:74).

Luke

Similarly to Mark’s gospel, Luke only includes one female slave in his narrative. Luke 22:56: “Then a slave woman (παιδίσκη τις), seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, ‘This man also was with him.’ But he denied it, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know him.’” (Οὐκ οἶδα αὐτόν, γύναι).³⁰ Luke’s rendering is close to Mark’s with one major exception: the household to which the slave belongs.³¹ Let us put Mark in parallel with Luke in order to consider what Luke may be doing with the narrative.

Luke mentions “a certain παιδίσκη” with no association in his narrative. The text seems to imply that it does not matter who this female slave belonged to. Since slaves were everywhere in the ancient Mediterranean world, Luke seems to assume that the reader will agree that he has provided sufficient information. Who the slave woman is and to whom she belongs does

Table 4.1

<i>Mark 14:66–68</i>	<i>Luke 22:56–57</i>
Καὶ ὄντος τοῦ Πέτρου κάτω ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ ἔρχεται μία τῶν παιδισκῶν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, 67 καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν Πέτρον θερμαινόμενον ἐμβλέψασα αὐτῷ λέγει, Καὶ σὺ μετὰ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ ἦσθα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. 68 ὁ δὲ ἡρνήσατο λέγων, Οὔτε οἶδα οὔτε ἐπίσταμαι σὺ τί λέγεις. While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the slave maids of the high priest came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, “You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.” 68 But he denied it, saying, “I do not know nor understand what you are talking about.”	56. ἰδοῦσα δὲ αὐτὸν παιδίσκη τις καθήμενον πρὸς τὸ φῶς καὶ ἀτενίσασα αὐτῷ εἶπεν, Καὶ οὗτος σὺν αὐτῷ ἦν 57 ὁ δὲ ἡρνήσατο λέγων, Οὐκ οἶδα αὐτόν, γύναι. Then a slave woman, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, “This man also was with him.” 57 But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.”

not matter for the purpose of his narrative. Luke does retain, however, the scrutinizing look of the slave. The puzzled and interrogating look of the slave in Luke interrupts Peter's search for comfort in the light (καθήμενον πρὸς τὸ φῶς, Luke 22:56). The slave in this picture appears to have the upper hand in an encounter that upsets Peter. The open, comforting space of the firelight where one can come to have warmth in the midst of the night becomes for Peter not a place of comfort and shelter from the cold, but a dangerous space. Under the gaze of that slave woman in the firelight, Peter judged it necessary to deny Jesus in order to save his own life. The slave woman renders him vulnerable, but she does not address Peter directly, as she does in Mark: "σὺ μετὰ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ ἦσθα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ."

The parallel to Jesus' baptism may be hinted at here as well. One may recall Jesus' prediction about his upcoming and agonizing baptism in Luke 12:50: "I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed." Peter, with much enthusiasm but without counting the cost, offered to be with Jesus at this crucial moment when it comes: "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33). After this thoughtless declaration, Jesus said to him: "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me" (Luke 22:34). In front of the slave, who indirectly offers him the baptism of death alongside Jesus, Peter declares publicly: "I do not know him, woman" (Οὐκ οἶδα αὐτόν, γύναι, Luke 22:57). Notice that Peter's answer is not addressed to the crowd, but to the παιδίσκη. She made her declaration a public statement ("This man also was with him," Luke 22:56), whereas he made his denial directly, almost privately, to the slave woman who threatened him. While Jesus was able to accept his place as an obedient son of God via his crucifixion, Peter is disobedient, denying his association with Jesus, and thus, refusing to pay the price of discipleship.

This slave woman presents a problem not only to Peter, but also to Luke, who does not seem to know what to make of her. As mentioned previously, Luke does not mention that the slave woman belongs to the high priest. By presenting her as a παιδίσκη who roams the city at night and does not belong to any household, Luke might be suggesting that she is a prostitute and sinner, since the word παιδίσκη may also have this connotation.³² Unlike other women in Luke, who show gratitude for healing, minister to Jesus, or provide financial support for the male disciples, this woman is presented as one who is separate from a group, coming from nowhere to disturb a student who is trying to follow Jesus, albeit from a distance. Although one may see this woman as one speaking prophetically when she invites Peter to acknowledge he was indeed with Jesus and die by following him openly, Luke's presentation of that slave woman is ambiguous.³³ She does not fit his category of well-behaved women limited in their roles as male caretakers, especially assigned to enhance the portrait of Jesus as a prophet.³⁴ This slave woman just comes as she is, seemingly to disturb both Peter and Luke. She challenges Peter

specifically in unexpected and very personal ways. The slave woman also disrupts Luke's categorization of women, in spite of his effort to control and to silence her by presenting her as a nameless, ownerless, *παιδίσκη* gazing at a male disciple at night. Instead, she eludes Luke's literary gender control.

The first point to acknowledge is that although the author distances the slave woman from the disciple by having her not address the male disciple directly, the force of the encounter pushes Peter to address her as a woman. Peter, in the end, denies both Jesus and Luke. He cannot distance himself from this woman, who is like a judge making a public pronouncement on his case. He denies being a follower of Jesus because this woman threatens his life at this crucial moment. She was the first person to question whether he was with Jesus or not, putting Peter into a state of defensiveness. Mark 14:68 reads: "But he denied it, saying, 'I do not know nor *understand what you are talking about.*'" In Luke, Peter's declaration is sliced and put in the mouth of a different protagonist. After Peter's encounter with the slave woman, he is confronted by two other people. What Peter says to the third person is similar to Peter's declaration to the slave woman as constructed in Mark 14:68, save for two interesting elements. First, Peter answers in Luke, "Man, I do not know" (Ἄνθρωπε, οὐκ οἶδα, 22:60), which resonates with "Woman, I do not know" (Οὐκ οἶδα αὐτόν, γύναι, Luke 22:57). Luke also omits "nor understand" (οὔτε ἐπίσταμαι), the key dismissive remark we find in Mark.

We should not read this omission as evidence that Luke respects the slave woman and does not want to accuse her of speaking nonsense. Luke skillfully softens the tone here to erase the presence and voice of the slave woman in the narrative by inventing a male character to confront Peter in her place. In Luke, a man confronts Peter in the last instance before the cock crows, as opposed to a female slave. Peter responds to this man by saying that he does not know what the man is talking about, not by saying that the man is talking nonsense, suggesting he understands the man's words fully. Luke's dilemma—or gender trouble—is that if he keeps the narrative as received from Mark, the slave woman appears strong and persistent, appearing to Peter not once, but twice before the crowd of bystanders realize that Peter certainly was with Jesus. Luke invents a scene wherein the slave woman appears only once, and Peter is confronted by men the other two times before the cock crows (Luke 22:59–60).

In Luke, Peter no longer loses his temper, nor does he act like a cursing, swearing fool, as he does in Mark. Luke evidently wants to keep Peter within the realm of normality and respectability, and avoid depicting Peter as a vulgar character that is pursued and overwhelmed by a nameless female slave. Luke diminishes the slave woman's importance in the story to rescue Peter from his shameful presentation in Mark. Luke simply brushes the slave woman aside to accomplish his editorial, ideological, and theological purposes. Luke's revisions may be subtle, but they are very purposeful. The implications of Luke's revisions are twofold: they generate sympathy for Peter as a reasonable and capable male leader in the early church, whilst simultaneously removing the agency of

this particular slave woman. In this way, Luke is able to establish the reputation of an extremely important leader in the early Christian movement, whilst putting a slave woman back in her low, rightful place. Therefore, these revisions allow the story to fit neatly into the Roman societal expectations of both women and slaves, and places Luke's gospel with the realm of normative accounts acceptable within a first-century Roman world.

Although there are no more references to slaves in Luke after this incident, women are mentioned again in several passages (23:27–28; 23:49; 23:55–56; 24:1–5; 24:9–10). Luke last mentions women in recounting their response to the resurrection of Jesus when male disciples dismiss their words as “non-sense” (λῆρος, Luke 24:11). Could Luke have avoided referring to what the female slave was telling Peter as senseless gibberish in order to avoid any link between the prophetic voice of the female slave and that of the women who went to the tomb?³⁵

John

The representation of the chief priest's female slave takes another editorial turn in John 18:15–26. Peter is presented as accompanying another disciple, who was known to the high priest.³⁶ The encounter between Peter and the woman occurs after the disciple who was known to the high priest was able to go into the courtyard; he then came back and spoke to the woman guarding the door to allow him to bring Peter in (18:16). After this, the identity of this woman is clearly stated: λέγει οὖν τῇ Πέτρῳ ἡ παιδίσκη ἡ θυρωρὸς (18:17). She is a παιδίσκη whose function is to guard the courtyard door of the high priest. In the gospel of Mark we learn that this woman is one of the high priest's slaves, but this detail is not included in Matthew or in Luke. John, however, retains this descriptor and adds another detail, indicating that the slave is a doorkeeper. The encounter between that female slave and Peter is expressed in the form of a question rather than as a declarative statement, as in Mark. Here in John she asks: “Are you not also one of the disciples of this man?” (18:17). This maidservant does not have a critically scrutinizing eye and does not make a declarative statement. She is simply suspicious that Peter might also be a student of the accused man who had been brought in for interrogation.³⁷ In response, we see Peter maintaining his composure and answering her question with as few words as possible: “I am not (Οὐκ εἰμί)” (18:17).

The second instance when Peter is put in an awkward position comes later when the narrative is broken off into two. The text gives information that was not given in the other gospels and identifies Peter's interactions with those outside of the house: “Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter was also standing with them and warming himself” (18:18). After this brief scene focusing on Peter outside, the narrative switches to what is happening inside where the high priest is questioning Jesus (19–24). Then,

after a few verses, the author moves back to Peter warming himself by the fire (18:25): “So they [presumably the slaves and the police] said to/asked him (εἶπον οὖν αὐτῷ): You are not also one of his disciples, are you? He began to deny it/denied it (ἡρνήσατο) and said: I am not (Οὐκ εἰμί)” (18:25). Still, Peter does not curse and he manages himself well in front of this company of slaves and the police. Then, as in Matthew, another slave appears. This slave is one of the slaves of the high priest (εἷς ἐκ τῶν δούλων τοῦ ἀρχιερέως), and she is a relative (συγγενῆς) of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. She was also in the garden with the guards when they came to arrest Jesus (18:26). We are not given this information in the other gospels. As in Mark, this slave also confronts Peter, but this interaction is devoid of tension or drama: “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” (18:26). Peter denies the charge. Then, at that moment, the cock crowed (18:27).

Table 4.2 shows the slave has been manipulated and morphed from one gospel to the next and what that manipulation might mean. I am most interested in the voice and presentation accorded to the slave(s) and not on Peter or Jesus as depicted in the narratives.

From Mark to John the portrayal of the slave has not only transformed, but is also rendered elusive. Throughout the different narratives, one element is constant: a παιδίσκη, probably one of the slaves working for the high priest, confronts Peter as he followed Jesus from a distance in the courtyard of the high priest. In Mark, as well as in John, the female slave acts with assurance and authority. In Mark, her gaze intimidates Peter; in Luke, her position as a guard of the gate gives her authority as to who she may allow to enter the courtyard. From Matthew, to Luke and then to John, the slave’s characteristics seem to change; there is a narrative disturbance in the slave’s presentation. One slave, a παιδίσκη becomes several slaves. Matthew writes about two slave women; Luke writes about one slave woman and other slaves, while John writes about a female slave who guarded the gate and another slave whose gender identity is elusive because the reader is not told whether this particular slave is male or female. Provided that the story in Mark gave the template for the other authors/editors to develop their own narratives—as a Markan priority is widely accepted—the question worth pondering is: Why would the writers alternate the narratives from including one παιδίσκη, who is clearly associated with the high priest, to two female slaves with no implicit or explicit connection with the high priest, to one παιδίσκη alongside other male slaves, and finally to John, where we find one slave woman and another slave (with no specificity of gender)? I am proposing to read the various manifestations of the slaves as the development of one character. The identity of the female slave is played with or managed by the various gospel writers/editors as we move from one gospel to the next. Matthew splits Mark’s one slave into two female characters. The first character still addresses Peter directly in a declarative mode, although she is deprived of her connection to the high priest. The second character, however, is a woman who does not talk directly

Table 4.2

<i>In Mark</i>	<i>In Matthew</i>	<i>In Luke</i>	<i>In John</i>
In Mark 14:66–68 we have one of the female slaves of the high priest, who when she saw Peter warming himself, stared at him and declared to him he was also with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.	In Matthew 26:69 one slave woman came to Peter sitting outside in the courtyard and she said to him he was also with Jesus the Galilean. Another slave woman, upon seeing Peter, said to those who were there: “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth” (Matt. 26:71).	Luke 22:56: “Then a slave woman, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, ‘This man also was with him.’” Other slaves, this time men, insisted Peter was with Jesus (Luke 22:58, 60).	In John, a female slave who works as a doorkeeper at the courtyard of the high priest first questioned Peter whether he was one of Jesus’ disciples. Another slave, who belongs to the high priest and who is a relative of the man whose ears Peter cut off, was in the garden when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus. That slave questioned Peter: “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” There is no indication to determine whether that specific slave was a woman or a man (John 18:26).

to Peter, but to the crowd. In Luke, the slave woman is one and many; the many are not females but male slaves. In John, the author retains her Markan character and identity, but only to a certain extent. She is also divided into two characters; the second is an ambiguous representation, as far as gender identity is concerned. In John, this other slave works for the high priest and his or her relative (Malchus, another of the high priest’s slaves) had his right ear cut off by Peter. If, as I propose, the gospel writers are playing with one character by giving her various manifestations, then one may wonder what is at stake for them. In other words, what is there for them to gain and for that particular slave woman to lose?

I want to suggest that these writers/editors operate thus for the sake of Peter, that is, in order to rehabilitate him—or more precisely his image and memory.³⁸ The transformation of Peter from a coward without self-control to a rehabilitated apostle, someone so worthy that he can be a reliable, trustworthy witness to the empty tomb and a bold herald of the gospel of Jesus, is the strategy used by the gospel writers/editors trying to differentiate him from

the woman slave. In other words, these male writers/editors use the figure of the slave woman strategically (they instrumentalize her in the narrative for a particular role), in order to differentiate Peter (not a slave, not a woman) and to transform him from a poltroon with no self-control to a rehabilitated apostle, who can serve as an important witness.

The reader knows that although Peter can be a laughable character, and that he did not understand the nature of the baptism of death that Jesus was going to undertake, Jesus prayed for him (Luke 22:32). The memory of Peter's denial is conserved without hurting the memory of Peter himself; the memory of a female slave staring at and questioning Peter is kept, but that recollection is unstable enough to end up being an unrecognizable picture. Although Peter denied Jesus and cried bitterly after realizing how cowardly he was, he was rehabilitated and went on to have fellowship with his resurrected master once again.³⁹ The picture is certainly different for the παιδίσκη.

One of the techniques or formulas of silencing the past that Michel-Rolph Trouillot has noted is that of erasure.⁴⁰ These can be illustrated in the treatment of the particular παιδίσκη that is of interest in this chapter. In the case of this slave woman, she is gradually erased from one gospel to the next. The other technique Trouillot highlights is banalization. This second formula is a favorite of specialists or interpreters. The slave woman is there, but there is hardly any attention paid to her. She is trivialized as a quaint figure pestering Peter, who needs to play the central role in the scholar's analysis of the text. In all the gospels, she appears only in relation to Peter; her presence is inconceivable without his. In the first scene in Mark she started out as a strong character in contrast to Peter's weakness. In our final glimpse of her in John she has lost her spiky edges. She disappears without a trace, losing her piercing gaze and her identity, although still retaining her voice. The last time the reader comes across her is when she refers to the violence Peter has done to one slave close to her. To this particular slave I now turn my attention.

The named male slave of the high priest

I will consider the slave Malchus who has been struck by Peter, and I will proceed from Mark through Matthew and Luke to John in order to analyze how Malchus has been depicted in these narratives.

Mark 14:47 is interesting for the way it describes the situation of Jesus' arrest. First, no name is mentioned for that particular slave. The scene is that of one disciple who stood near Jesus at the time of his arrest, drew his knife, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.⁴¹ There is no clear description of who this zealot disciple is, but the description of the one whose body is mutilated is that of a slave, and that slave's owner is the powerful high priest. Second, the description of the scene is marred with violent images. The group that came to arrest Jesus is identified as a crowd coming from the high priest, scribes, and elders with knives and clubs (Mark 14:43). The situation is tense with the arrest

of Jesus and the bodily harm done to the high priest's slave by one who stood near Jesus, drew his knife (τὴν μάχαιραν) and cut off his ear (Mark 14:47).⁴² Jesus' reaction in the melee is that of exasperation that the crowd comes after him with knives and clubs as if they were coming to arrest a bandit (Mark 14:48).

The description of the arrest and the wounding of the slave recurs in Matthew 26:51, also excluding any mention of names. When the large crowd (ὄχλος πολὺς) came and laid hands on Jesus, "Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear" (Matthew 26:51). Jesus' reaction to the action of this one close to him is that he should put his knife back into its place, "for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). He tells the militant student he could appeal to his father, who could have sent legions of angels to defend him (Matthew 26:53). Jesus rebukes the crowd for the fact they have come to arrest him with knives and clubs, as if they came to arrest a bandit (ὥς ἐπὶ ληστὴν) (Matthew 26:55).

In Luke when the crowd came to arrest Jesus those around him asked Jesus whether they should strike with the knife.⁴³ "Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear" (Luke 22:50).⁴⁴ The identity of the one striking is still not revealed, but there are new elements of information here. First, all those around Jesus seem ready to engage in violent confrontation against the coming crowd with their own weapons.⁴⁵ Second, there is specificity as to which ear of the unnamed slave was cut off: it was the right one. Jesus responds to the disorder with a command: "No more of this." And he touched his ear and healed him (Luke 22:51). Then he reproached the crowd for coming to arrest him with knives and clubs as if he were a bandit (Luke 22:52). Luke's Jesus does not condone the violence of a zealot follower, thus extending the author's invitation to a Roman readership to join the movement of a leader who heals the wounds of a dishonourable slave body, instead of perpetuating various and endless cycles of violence.⁴⁶

In John it is no longer an indiscriminate mob that came to arrest Jesus but a "detachment of soldiers (τὴν σπεῖραν, the cohort, the tactical unit), together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons" (John 18:3). Jesus stands as one protecting his disciples and he asks that the men be allowed to go. Then, "Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus" (John 18:10).⁴⁷ The identity of the one striking the slave is finally revealed: it is Peter. The name of the slave is also revealed: he is Malchus, a slave belonging to the high priest. It is not clear why John mentions more than one high priest (18:3), but he seems to be correcting himself in 18:13. In the scene, Peter had a knife, seemingly unlike the other disciples and contrary to the image presented in Mark and in Luke. Jesus orders Peter to put his knife back into its sheath, and he adds: "Am I not to drink the cup that the father has given me?" (18:11). John retains Luke's information that it was the right ear of the slave that was cut off, but

he does not mention the healing miracle of Jesus restoring the slave's ear to its proper place, as in Luke.⁴⁸

Once again, the four gospels present a slave with only slight modifications from one text to the next. The constant element is their association with the high priest. The slave moves from being presented as a nameless slave belonging to the high priest, whose ear has been cut off, to being a specific slave named Malchus, one of the high priest's slaves, whose right ear has been cut off by one in Jesus' close circle named Peter.⁴⁹ One of the gospels (Luke) tries to soften the violence done to Malchus by having Jesus restoring Malchus' ear. One of the slaves is a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off (εἷς ἐκ τῶν δούλων τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, συγγενὴς ὧν οὗ ἀπέκοψεν Πέτρος τὸ ὠτίον, John 18:26).⁵⁰ In John's narrative, the cutting of Malchus' ear is vivid in the memory of the maidservant, and she does not show any awareness that her συγγενὴς (kinsfolk, blood relative, someone of the same race) has been healed by Jesus. She wants the one who has done the deed to answer for his crime. She points out it is Peter who has acted thus (John 18:26).

Both Malchus and his συγγενὴς are victims of violence. One is physically assaulted, although one text tries to rectify the harm done to his body by reverting to a healing miracle, while the other is handled carefully in the narratives to the point of becoming almost an indistinct figure. Malchus underwent physical aggression without ever uttering a word. He is associated with the high priest, who has the authority to condemn anyone who has damaged his property.⁵¹

The gospels present four different reactions to the violence done to the slave Malchus:

- 1 Indifference. Nothing is said or done about the cutting of the slave's ear in Mark.
- 2 Violence begets violence: in Matthew, there is still a general indifference to the actual situation of the slave bleeding, but the message put in Jesus' mouth is that once one opens the cycle of violence, one is susceptible to succumb to violence.
- 3 Advocacy for something other than violence and encouragement of a compassionate response. Violence should be ceased, and a slave figure who is wounded is healed through the miraculous hands of Jesus, as constructed in Luke.
- 4 Violence against a known slave who belongs to a powerful owner should not be pursued because his master is powerful. Violence done to the slave is litigated and compensated as an assault on the master, not on the slave. John's Jesus invites whoever holds a weapon and is ready to strike at one opposing and rejecting Jesus' message to put it back in its proper place.

These perspectives on violence perpetrated against Malchus from the various gospels on the part of Jesus' followers contrast with the perspective of

the slave woman. Her perspective may be articulated thus: the one who perpetuates violence against a slave body, and in particular against the body of a συγγενής who is bound in slavery to the same master, should acknowledge who his associates are instead of denying it, and should face the appropriate consequences for his acts. The slave woman challenges Peter. She is seeking justice for what has been done not only to her συγγενής, but to her as well.⁵² If we imagine that Malchus was linked to her in a manner beyond that of being a relative or of being from the same ethnic group⁵³ and consider the plausibility he was in a relationship with her,⁵⁴ then what has been done to him would have been particularly poignant or significant to that female slave. However, regardless of the specific nature of the relationship between Malchus and that nameless slave and the ambiguity imposed by John with regard to her gender, that slave who stood up to Peter and asked him whether he was not the one who cut off Malchus' ear poses a challenge to Peter and, to a certain extent, to the various enactments of the slaves in the gospels, thus creating some imbalance in the narratives.

The crowd came to arrest Jesus, and someone from Jesus' group (Peter) attacked the slave of the high priest. If Jesus and his group were particularly opposed to the temple establishment⁵⁵ then attacking the surrogate body of the slave's owner would be to inflict a blow to the high priest himself, by means of affronting his property. Thus, Malchus becomes the body upon which the attack on the temple establishment becomes manifest, and the overthrow of the religious/political authorities in Judea is symbolically inaugurated through damaging one of the high priest's chattels. Another slave saw that militant action and may have subsequently reported it to the high priest.

The high priest is presented in Mark as someone who is utterly upset with Jesus and goes out of his way to have him condemned. When he heard Jesus, the Galilean apocalyptic prophet, state he is the Messiah and that it will be evident to them when the Son of Man sits at the right hand of power and comes with the clouds of heaven (14:62), the high priest tore down his clothes because to him, this is utter blasphemy. In all the gospels the relationship between the one whose ear has been sliced and the high priest is established. Could it then be permissible to extrapolate that the high priest might have been particularly upset because of what one of Jesus' followers did to his property? It could also become apparent to—or be perceived by—the high priest, and through him to the Romans, that Jesus and his group of followers may have been mounting a violent revolutionary uprising during the turbulent festival of Passover in Jerusalem by having at least two followers armed and ready to defend Jesus against those who came to arrest him, ultimately putting the *pax romana* at risk.⁵⁶ What happened to the high priest's slave would then be seen by the Jewish authorities as a prelude to a nascent popular uprising that might happen during the festivities. What happened to Malchus could signify what awaits the properties of those collaborating with Rome.

Jesus is arrested, but the one who committed this act is still free and following Jesus from a short distance. When the female slave sees him, she identifies him as the one who struck Malchus, and thus, one who could still be carrying his knife, ready to attack others as well. In Mark, Jesus does not talk to Peter after his action in rebuking him to put his knife away. Thus Peter presumably still had his knife with him as he was following Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest. There were other slaves in the courtyard, and with Peter allegedly still carrying his knife, the potential for more violence was present. The female slave took a risk in approaching Peter because she had seen what he did in the garden. She was also a slave belonging to the same owner of the injured slave. Peter could continue to attack slaves of the high priest in order to propel other Jesus sympathizers and poor who were tired of the hegemony of the Sadducees and other close clients of Rome to join him in taking arms in order to inaugurate the Empire of God.

Inside the court Jesus states he is the Messiah who will be sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven, and Peter out in the courtyard could have wanted to act on that vision. However, the piercing look of the female slave intimidates him. He may still have had a knife underneath his cloak, but he is completely disarmed by the female slave. Peter may have exhibited *virtus* (“masculine” bravado) by striking Malchus in the garden, but he is subdued by the nameless female slave who questions him, pushing him to lose his will to act in the high priest’s courtyard. The female slave who guarded the gate (ἡ παιδίσκη ἡ θυρωρός) (John 18:17) may be (re) imagined as one of the few slaves able to give the reader access, metaphorically speaking, to what is going on inside the court of history, so that one may find a way to form one’s own theological or historical judgment and conclusions through the narrative maze of the gospels’ treatment of the slaves.

4.3 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to highlight the presence and voice of two particular slaves. I was not interested in parabolic slaves in the gospels, or in slaves talked about. I wanted to see slaves in the messiness of the social worlds depicted in the gospels, and uncover the potential significance of marginal characters represented in these narratives. I wanted to highlight their voices, however faintly echoed, in order to understand some of the stories in a new light. In a sense, I wanted to reimagine the slaves in the gospels, but it turns out few slaves are present and fewer actually speak in the gospels.

In this chapter, I have proposed to read various presentations of slaves in the high priest’s courtyard as the morphing of one female slave into different figures (male, female, and undeclared, as far as gender is concerned), speaking with different voices and modes (declarative, interrogative). This particular way of analyzing the texts has allowed me to see that this bifurcation of the slave is a reading and interpretative strategy exercised by the authors/editors

of the gospels to control that slave and to (re)habilitate the image of an important male disciple, Peter. In other words, the female slave becomes the mechanism for excusing Peter's lack of restraint. The voice of that particular slave, however, remains accusatory. That slave saw the act of violence perpetrated by one close to Jesus on a related fellow slave, and challenges Peter on his behalf.

That slave's voice is the only clear voice of slaves in all the gospels; could it be a prophetic voice?⁵⁷ Could the message articulated by that slave be that violence against slave bodies should not be perpetrated? In what way could slaves in the first and early second centuries in Judea and in surrounding areas in the Mediterranean under the Roman Empire become friends to those following Jesus and hear in any meaningful way what he had to say to his disciples: "I no longer call you slaves, for the slave does not know what the master does; but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard from the father I have made known to you" (John 15:15)? What would that mean for the disciples who bickered frequently among themselves about who was the greatest to really embrace Jesus' call and admonition that "whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave" (Matthew 20:27)? How would others who are free within the group treat a slave operating within a Christ-group? How would the male preachers and followers of Christ treat an exploited female slave, who is not part of a Christ-group, but is proclaiming the gospel? These questions are leading the investigation of the next chapter, where the focus is on slaves in the book of Acts.

Notes

- 1 Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals* 14.44–49 (ed. Moses Hadas; New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 296.
- 2 John 15:15; my translation.
- 3 There are some discrepancies in the various descriptions of this particular slave. I will pay attention to these issues later on in the chapter.
- 4 See Jennifer Glancy, *Slaves in the New Testament*, chapter 4, "Parabolic Bodies: The figure of the Slave in the Sayings of Jesus." She considers Jesus' reliance on slavery as metaphors for his parables in Matthew and in Luke in order for her to question the ideology that is behind the use of slavery in these parables. On Jesus' parables that feature slaves, see also Ernest van Eck, *The Parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a Social Prophet* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).
- 5 Jeremy Punt, *Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation: Reframing Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 48. The full quote reads: "Broadly speaking then, postcolonial biblical criticism is less about propounding the virtues of a new methodology and much more about a shift in focus. It employs a reading strategy of training the eye on that which was missing in previous analyses, while pursuing a rewriting and correction of past texts—it involves exposure, restoration, and transformation."
- 6 See Sandra R. Joshel and Lauren Hackworth Petersen, *The Material Life of Roman Slaves* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), for a similar approach, and also Robert C. Knapp, *Invisible Romans: Prostitutes, outlaws, slaves, gladiators, ordinary men and women ... the Romans that history forgot* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

- 7 What Christopher Rowland states about the role of the interpreter to notice tensions in and around texts is true in this regard: "A text will not usually produce a particular ideology in a 'pure' form, whether it be supportive of the *status quo* or not. Accordingly, however loud the note of protest in a text, it is going to be shot through the ambiguities of being part and parcel of a world that is itself full of contradiction and pain. Any text's relation to that struggle will not necessarily stand firm on one side or another. Sometimes it will manifest the voice of the oppressor and his ideology in the process of seeking to articulate that subversive memory. It is part of the task of interpretation to lay bare the ambiguities and contradictions that are inherent in all texts." See Rowland, "Social, Political, and Ideological Criticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (eds., J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 659.
- 8 The most compelling and thorough treatment of this parable is by John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).
- 9 The actions of God are placed in parallel to the actions of the slave owners in the parables, as they are introduced with the formula, "the Empire of God is like ..." Hector Avalos, in his very provocative style states: "If the parables are analogous to God's kingdom, then God's kingdom can be a place of horrific torture." See Hector Avalos, *Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Ethics of Biblical Scholarship* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 154.
- 10 See J. Glancy, "Slaves and Slavery in the Matthean Parables," *JBL* 119.1 (2000): 67–90.
- 11 παῖς refers to a child, to a young man, to a slave of any age, or to a boy (boy-slave) who is at the service of a master. See BDAG, s.v. παῖς. Translating παῖς as "boy," or "pet slave" in this case, or even "boy-toy/sex object," allows one to highlight the ambiguity of the language used by the centurion. In Martial, for example, boys are referenced as sex objects (3.65, 4.42, 11.22, 12.96.7.12). For more on exploring this usage of the word παῖς see Thomas K. Hubbard, ed., *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome. A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). See also Mark Golden, "Pais, 'Child' and 'Slave,'" *L'Antiquité Classique* 54 (1985): 91–104.
- 12 On the Roman masters employing professional torturers to punish slaves deemed useless and recalcitrant see Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 109, note 32, especially for the bibliographical sources provided. The practice of a slave master handing his slaves over to professional torturers to punish them in sometimes brutal manners, such as cutting them in pieces (Matthew 24:51), is accepted without any qualm or moral objection by Jesus, as portrayed in the gospels.
- 13 Albert Harrill summarizes this well when he states: "The author of Matthew makes explicit his contrast of the 'good slave' (who shows loyalty to an absent master) and the 'bad slave' (who does not), two stock types in tales of *absente ero* (when the master's away) familiar from ancient comedy." See Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 25. Scholars interested in both ancient slavery and ancient Greek comedy may also want to refer to the excellent edited volume by Ben Akrigg and Rob Tordoff, *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greek Comic Drama* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On the trope of "good" vs "bad" slaves in Roman comedy, see W. G. Thalmann "Versions of slavery in the Captivi of Plautus," *Ramus* 25 (1996): 112–145.
- 14 The lot of the "bad slave," as stated by Richard P. Saller, "was to be beaten," while the "good slave" was "to internalize the constant threat of a beating." See Saller, "Corporal Punishment, Authority, and Obedience in the Roman Household," in

- Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (ed. Beryl Rawson; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 144–165. William G. Thalmann suggests that the depiction of the “bad” slave in literature (who “possesses no independent capacity for moral choice, and is therefore easily corruptible by any who want to use him or her for their own ends”) serves a function that “tends to naturalize slavery: by virtue of his defective character this slave should be in servitude ... even though it is also because of those same inferior traits that he or she resists.” See William G. Thalmann, “Despotic Authority, Fear, and Ideology of Slavery,” in *Fear of Slaves—Fear of Enslavement in the Ancient Mediterranean. Peur de l’esclave—Peur de l’esclavage en Méditerranée ancienne (Discours, représentations, pratiques). Actes du XXIXe Colloque du Groupe International de Recherche sur l’Esclavage dans l’Antiquité (GIREA). Rethymnon 4–7 Novembre 2004* (ed. Anastasia Serghidou; Franche-Comté: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2007), 202.
- 15 One may also notice that due to the close proximity between owner and slave inside the households many slaves in antiquity knew the deep internal, private matters of the house and used that knowledge for the good of the family (implying that a slave with that kind of strategic knowledge could also act otherwise, and was feared by the masters to be about to act otherwise). See Richard P. Saller, “The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery,” in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage* (ed. Michael L. Bush; London: Routledge, 1996), 112–129.
 - 16 The dishonest manager may be understood as functioning in the narrative as a type of *parasitus* (parasite), which is well known in ancient drama. See Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 67–83. On this parable see Fabian E. Udoh, “The Tale of an Unrighteous Slave (Luke 16:1–8 [13]),” *JBL* 128.2 (2009): 311–335.
 - 17 Glancy is perceptive when she states: “While Luke leaves no doubt that slaveholders would not customarily act as waiters for weary slaves, the structure of these parables rests on the recognition that the welfare of chattel slaves depends on the caprice of the slaveholder and not on the intrinsic merits of the slave.” *Slavery*, 110. See also Marianne B. Kartzow, “Gendered Slave Bodies and ‘Metaphorical Violence’: Thinking with Luke 12:45–46,” in *Destabilizing the Margins: An Intersectional Approach to Early Christian Memory* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 31–45.
 - 18 Harrill notices rightly that “Compared with Matthew’s account, Luke’s version portrays less violence in regard to the slave: the Lukan master, though angry, gives the slave no more than a stern talking to (Luke 19:23). Decreasing the level of violence that Jesus condones is typical of Luke’s redaction of Q and Mark, advancing Luke’s theme of apologetics.” Harrill, *Slaves in The New Testament*, 209, note 32.
 - 19 Luke modifies the Markan formulation because, as suggested by Glancy, it is “potentially offensive to hearers.” Glancy, *Slavery*, 106.
 - 20 See Glancy, *Slavery*, 106–107 to question that declaration. She states, “After telling his followers that he will no longer call them slaves but friends, Jesus employs the slave-master rubric to describe their relationship. Here as elsewhere in the farewell discourse, John’s logic falters. Nonetheless, these sayings reconfirm in a distinctive context the impression that Jesus routinely drew on the imagery of slaves and slaveholders to describe the relationship between his followers and himself or perhaps between the followers and a divine master.” Jesus, in stating that he will no longer call his disciples slaves but friends is, according to Hector Avalos, “exercising a very well-known option of masters to adopt slaves or treat them as members of the household. These slaves can be like family to one another, but that does not mean slavery has ceased to exist. This privilege is extended only to those the master has

'chosen' ([Jon 15] (v. 19).” Hector Avalos, *Slavery*, 156. Avalos helpfully provides an example of such friendship in Seneca: “Associate with your slave on kindly, even on affable terms; let him talk with you; plan with you; live with you ... Do you not see even this—how our ancestors removed from masters everything invidious and from slaves everything insulting? They called the master the ‘father of the household’, and slaves ‘members of the household’, a custom which still holds in the mime ... Yes, you are mistaken if you think I would bar from my table certain slaves whose duties are more humble.” Seneca, *Epistles*, 47.13–15 (Gummere, LCL): “Vive cum servo clementer, comiter quoque, et in sermonem illum admitte et in consilium e in convictum ... Ne illud quidem videtis, quam omnem invidiam maiores nostri dominis, omnem contumeliam servis detraxerint? Dominum patrem familiae appellaverunt, servos, quod etiam in mimis adhuc durat, familiares ... Erras si existimas me quosdam quasi sordidioris operae reiecturum.” Seneca does indeed advocate treating slaves well, but it is partly to encourage better work and loyalty from them—that is, it is not a true friendship. Indeed, those in the *familia Caesaris* (officials, freedman, as well as slaves) were also called “friends of Caesar,” on the basis of their loyalty to him, of playing the role of devoted clients at his service while expecting favors in turn from him, and certainly not on being at the same social and political level as him. See P. R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). See also Gérard Boulvert, *Domestique et fonctionnaire sous le Haut-Empire romain. La Condition de l'affranchi et de l'esclave du Prince*. Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon 151 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1974). Thus, those close and loyal to Jesus, and those following him in his various journeys and observing his teachings, are deemed to be his friends, his brothers and sisters (Mark 3:35; Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26). However, his friends are called to serve one another as he serves them and not lord over them, in a similar manner as “the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them” (Matthew 20:25). The disciples needed to learn the lesson that the one needing to be first among them shall be the slave of all (Matthew 24:27). In a prominent Johannine scene, Jesus performs a servile office (foot washing) and exhorts his disciples to imitate him (John 13:1–17).

- 21 Richard Saller depicts the general relationship between slaveholders and enslaved persons in the context of ancient Roman Household very well in this statement worth quoting at length: “The relationship between master and slave was inherently one of exploitation. The loyalty of a slave was welcome and restraint on the part of the master recommended, but the ultimate requirement of a slave was obedience, and it was widely believed that a slave’s obedience rested finally on fear of punishment. Because the relationship was basically exploitative, the slave was believed to be naturally recalcitrant—hence the need to be goaded by the whip, which was a (and perhaps the) principal feature of the slave’s condition.” See Saller, “Corporal Punishment,” 164.
- 22 Glancy, *Slavery*, 110.
- 23 However, the example of Jesus in a servile position and washing the feet of his disciples in John is necessary to be mentioned in order to add some nuance to our evaluation.
- 24 See Sandra Joshel, “Slavery and Roman Literature Culture,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 1 (ed. P. A. Cartledge and K. R. Bradley), 215. See also William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*. Roman Literature and Its Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Ato Quayson is pertinent in his analysis of the relationship between literature and the social. He is worth quoting at length: “Any concrete social situation described in

- the literary text is to be grasped primarily as a problem or an enigma whose purpose is not (solely) the disclosure of an authentic cultural life but rather the embedded thematic of change, process, and contradiction. The form in which these are to be discerned is through a focus on the variety of relations established between the various elements in the text and between these and the several discursive contexts that might be dialogically adduced for the text, *irrespective of where the text originally came from*. Literature and the social are related to each other because they mutually mirror systemic heterogeneities that manifest themselves as constellated and reconstellating thresholds.” See Quayson, *Calibrations: Reading for the Social* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), Introduction, xxxi (emphasis original).
- 25 Although παιδίσκη can be translated as “young female slave” or as “slave girl,” as most Bible translations render it, I prefer to translate the term as “female slave,” “maid” or “maidservant.” This way, I detach myself from the social elite and slave-owning judgment and social privilege (in antiquity and in more recent times) of considering even adult slaves as lacking the honour and dignity of fully developed adults by addressing a slave man as “boy,” and a slave woman as “girl.” In Classical literature, παιδίσκη could simply refer to a young woman/girl, and not necessarily to a slave.
 - 26 Cf. John 1:46.
 - 27 For a thorough textual analysis of this statement, see Eran Shuali, “Did Peter Speak Hebrew to the Servant? A Linguistic Examination of the Expression ‘I Do Not Know What You Are Saying’ (Matt 26:70; Mark 14:68; Luke 22:60),” *JBL* 136 (2017): 407–418.
 - 28 Women were supposed to possess σωφροσύνη as well; it just looked a little different in practice from male σωφροσύνη. The classic work on σωφροσύνη is Helen North’s *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1966). On “feminine sôphrosunê” see her article “The Mare, the Vixen, and the Bee: ‘Sophrosyne’ as the Virtue of Women in Antiquity,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 2 (1977): 35–48. See also G. J. De Vries, “Σωφροσύνη en Grec Classique,” *Mnemosyne, Third Series* 11 (1943): 81–101; William V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of anger control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Adriaan Rade-maker, *Sophrosyne and the Rhetoric of Self-Restraint: Polysemy and Persuasive Use of an Ancient Greek Value Term* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
 - 29 On Matthew’s literary and theological characterization of crowds, see J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in Matthew*. NovTSup 102 (Leiden/Boston/Cologne: Brill, 2002).
 - 30 Carolyn Osiek does underline the fact that Peter is addressing the female slave as γόναι, but she does not investigate what the implication of this address could be in the narrative. This is what she states: “In Luke, Peter addresses her as γόναι, an unusual form of address for a slave, but probably her slave status is not at issue here.” My question to her is: Why would her slave status not be at issue here? See Osiek, “Female Slaves, Porneia, and the Limits of Obedience,” in *Early Christian Families in Context: an interdisciplinary dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 267, note 26.
 - 31 Luke also mentions a different character (similarly to Matthew) declaring to Peter he was one of those with Jesus. However, the identity of this other figure is clearly not a woman since Peter replied: “Man, I am not” (Ἄνθρωπε οὐκ εἰμι Luke 22:58), although this particular character could be that of another slave as well.
 - 32 See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1287. Juvenal (Sat. 6) mentions women who go

- out at night to prostitute themselves at tombs. Juvenal also refers to Empress Messalina going out at night to prostitute herself and dishonour her marriage (6.114–141).
- 33 F. Scott Spencer, “Out of mind, out of voice: Slave-girls and Prophetic daughters in Luke-Acts,” *BibInt.* vii.2 (1999): 133–155.
 - 34 See Mary Rose D’Angelo, “(Re)Presentations of women in the gospel of Matthew and Luke-Acts,” in *Women & Christian Origins* (ed., Ross S. Kraemer and Mary R. D’Angelo; New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 171–195.
 - 35 Luke’s other mention of a παιδίσκη (Rhoda) is in Acts 12:15. I will consider that specific slave in the next chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that the other slave’s encounter is with Peter as well. The παιδίσκη in the gospel identifies who Peter is, just as the παιδίσκη in Acts recognizes Peter’s voice, as he is standing knocking outside of the household where she works. The nameless female slave doorkeeper in the gospels belongs to the high priest, whereas Rhoda belongs to someone within the Christ-group. Both, however, are deemed to be speaking nonsense, just as the women’s announcement of Jesus’ resurrection is considered nonsense by the male disciples.
 - 36 J. Ramsey Michaels states something interesting and worth noticing: “If this disciple, who was known to the high priest, is the source for the narrative of both the arrest and the interrogation, it is understandable that Malchus, the high priest’s slave, would be named (v. 10) and also that Peter’s third questioner (v. 26) would be identified as Malchus’ relative. The latter identification serves as an ironic link between Peter’s misguided zeal in the garden in verse 10 and his abject cowardice in the high priest’s courtyard.” See Michaels, *John*. New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 309.
 - 37 Incidentally, there is no word on the other (unnamed) disciple who was known by the high priest, in the sense of his association or involvement with Jesus.
 - 38 The best works I am aware of on Peter’s memory/interpreted figure, as preserved by various earliest Christ-groups and discussed in contemporary theological debates, are by Markus Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter in Ancient Reception and Modern Debate* (WUNT 262; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), and Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012). See also, Christian Grappe, *Images de Pierre aux deux premiers siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995); Frederick S. Tappenden, “On the Difficulty of Molding a Rock: The Negotiation of Peter’s Reputation in Early Christian Memory,” in *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 263–287.
 - 39 An analysis informed by subaltern studies shows that the process of Peter’s rehabilitation is for the sake of assuring and assuming power in the historical development of the Jesus movement. Peter’s rehabilitation means that, in time, he gained power and authority and played the role of an “empowered representative” (the term is from Bockmuehl, 2012, 76) of the movement, which in turn translated into power and authority for the early Christian thinkers, intellectuals, theologians, bishops, presbyters, elders and deacons, who insisted they have received their mandate through Jesus and through apostolic succession, especially through Peter the first bishop of Rome, admired for his great faith and deemed by some to be the “rock” on which Jesus built his church. Bockmuehl contends that “The memory of Peter as the ‘rock’ appears less as personal memory or polemical tradition than as a consensual principle held in common among many different communities.” *Ibid.*, 179. It might well be so, but the question worth pondering is what is there to gain for these communities, or better, what is beneficial to some influential members

- and leaders of these ecclesial communities in terms of power by associating with one apostolic figure remembered as “caretaker of the kingdom’s keys, as binder and looser” (Ibid., 183)? Bockmuehl does not consider this line of enquiry in his otherwise excellent study. The enduring memory of Peter as the “rock” contains in itself seed that will germinate, in time, to allow those who deem it their Christian duty to lock dissidents who do not align themselves to particular views or “right” understandings of God’s kingdom here on earth.
- 40 See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1995), 96.
- 41 There are few parallel elements between Jesus’ arrest and that of Vitellius, the Roman emperor as reported by Tacitus in his *Histories*. Both are abandoned by their closest allies; both are insulted; both showed self-mastery and did not resist during what was to them a lonely and frightful moment. Just as one of Jesus’ supporters cut off an ear of one of those who came to arrest him, one of Vitellius’ supporters came up and cut off an ear of the tribune guarding him. This is how Tacitus reports the incident: “One of the soldiers from Germany met him and struck at him in rage, or else his purpose was to remove him the quicker from insult, or he may have been aiming at the tribune—no one could tell. He cut off the tribune’s ear and was at once run through” (Obvius e Germanicis militibus Vitellium infest ictu per iram, vel quo maturius ludibrio eximeret, an tribunum adpetierit, in incerto fuit: aurem tribune amputavit ac statim confossus est). Tacitus, *The Histories*, 3.84 (trans. Clifford H. Moore; London: Harvard University Press, 1956), 476–477. Brian J. Incigneri proposes to understand this incident in Mark and the phrase “servant of the high priest” as a direct allusion to the Vitellius incident. This incident, according to Incigneri, may serve not only as a reminder of the fate of the previous emperor that brought chaos when Vespasian gained power through armed forces, but also as a way to discourage the use of force from Jesus’ followers (14:48–49). See Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark’s Gospel* (Biblical Interpretation Series, 65; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 176. Hector Avalos also mentions this incident and suggests that, based upon the parallels between the two stories, “we could read into the arrest of Jesus a stereotypical account of the arrest of a leader regarded in favor by the author.” See Avalos, *The Bad Jesus: The Ethics of New Testament Ethics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 90. The first act of violence in the hours leading up to Jesus’ arrest is perpetrated not by those who came to arrest Jesus but by one of Jesus’ disciples against a slave. Jennifer Glancy suggests that “we focus not on corporal knowledge but on [...] corporal ignorance—a culpable ignorance, at best oblivious to the cost of violence inflicted in the name of Jesus.” “The empathy created among members of the baptized community by visceral sharing in the passion of Jesus does not extend to damage inflicted—incidentally or not—on those outside that collectivized trauma.” Her conclusion is that, “Matthew, Luke, and John attempt to domesticate the first act of physical violence said to be committed the night of Jesus’ arrest, an act of violence committed not against his body but perpetrated by his followers against a slave. From allegorical readings of late antiquity to contemporary historical criticism, interpretative tradition deflects attention away from the damaged body of the slave and thus away from the collective memory of a household of enslaved persons wounded by assault.” See Glancy, “Corporal Ignorance: The Refusal of Embodied Memory,” in *The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field* (ed. Yvonne Sherwood; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 390–401 (here 391, 395, 401). I thank Jennifer for sharing her work with me.
- 42 I translate τὴν μάχαιραν as knife, but when I quote the NRSV I keep the translation they provide. See Paula Fredriksen, “Arms and The Man: A Response to

- Dale Martin's 'Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous,' *JSNT* 37.3 (2015): 312–325.
- 43 This seems to suggest that more than one had a knife (cf. Luke 22:36–38).
- 44 Dale Martin, in a provocative article, states this in relation to how the incident is narrated in Luke: "The author of Luke–Acts, as we might expect from his depiction of the non-violent, innocent early church and the basically benevolent Romans, goes the furthest in attempting to play down the incident and protect Jesus from any suspicion of rebellion. This author first has Jesus tell his disciples to arm themselves, but only in order to fulfill a prophecy—a prophecy, incidentally, that says nothing about swords or arms of any kind. When the disciples rather ridiculously produce only two swords and ask, 'Will just two be enough?', Jesus says yes, two will be plenty. According to Luke's account, the disciple who strikes the slave even first asks, 'Lord, should we strike with the sword?' He strikes, though, without waiting for explicit permission. Just to make sure we know Jesus himself meant no harm, the author informs us that Jesus immediately and miraculously healed the man's ear. I am sure we are to suppose that the slave enjoyed even better hearing afterwards." See D. Martin, "Jesus in Jerusalem: Armed and Not Dangerous," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (2014): 3–24 (here 6).
- 45 D. Martin suggests, "Luke's account of Jesus instructing the disciples to get swords merely in order to fulfill prophecy, his insistence that there were only two swords involved, the disciple asking permission, and Jesus' response are in all likelihood inventions of the author." Indeed, the prophecy that is presupposed to be fulfilled in this incident is Isa. 53.12: "He was counted among the lawless." However, as Martin notices, there is nothing in the Isaiah text that presupposes any sort of violence. Martin then advances, which I concur with, although with some reserve, that "Luke invents the account of the fulfillment of prophecy precisely because he knows that if Jesus' disciples were armed in Jerusalem, and especially during the celebrations of the Passover festival, Jesus and his disciples would in fact be a band of *ληστές*—brigands, bandits, or social rebels. So Luke, more than any of the others, goes to lengths to explain away any rebellious or political significance of the idea that Jesus' disciples may indeed have been armed at his arrest." *Ibid.*, 6. I doubt that all of Jesus' disciples might have been armed, although at least some of Jesus' disciples on the night of his arrest probably carried *μάχαιραι* (that is, that they might have been in possession of a knife, a dagger or some sort of "short sword") with the clear view to instigate a kind of apocalyptic violent process during the turbulent festival of Passover with the hope that angels would come and help them usher in the new age of the Empire of God in the land of his people, as proposed by Martin. I do not concur fully with such an intriguing scenario, not because I believe Jesus and his bands were non-militant Jews who were not hoping, and praying, and expecting religious/political/economic changes that would put an end to the oppression of the poor, alleviate famines, eliminate heavy tax burdens, and all kinds of exploitation in the land, but because that is not what the evidence from the texts points to.
- 46 For Glancy, "In Luke, the slave's body tells a story, but the story is not about a slave's violation at the hands of Jesus' followers. Rather, the slave's body serves as a chapter in a larger narrative about Jesus' compassion, solicitude exhibited even in a moment when Jesus is subjected to what Luke terms 'the power of darkness' (25:53)." See Glancy, "Corporal Ignorance," 8.
- 47 For Arthur J. Droge, "Malchus remains a mystery. While the name is not unattested, it would be unusual, to say the least, for a slave to be named 'King'! By having Peter strike at this (human) 'king' in a vain attempt to save Jesus, the author implies perhaps that Peter regarded Jesus as an earthly king." See Droge,

- “The Status of Peter in the Fourth Gospel: A Note on John 18:10–11,” *JBL* 109.2 (1990): 307–311 (here 309). Indeed, the name “Malchus” is not an uncommon name for this period. Raymond E. Brown has noted that, “‘Malchus’ is found five times in Josephus and is known from Palmyrene and Nabatean inscriptions (whence the suggestion that Malchus was an Arab).” See Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (xiii–xxi) (AB 29A: New York: Doubleday, 1970), 812.
- 48 The incident of the severed ear probably happened, based on the criteria of embarrassment and multiple attestations; otherwise, it would have been strange for the gospel writers to invent such an odd story and to associate it to a group and a leader whose memory earlier Christ-groups wanted to present to Roman readers as non-threatening and nonviolent.
- 49 Christopher W. Skinner has suggested that Malchus’ presence as a minor character in John 18 serves to enhance the action of the narrative and develop Peter’s characterization in the story. He states, “Peter’s actions with the sword contribute more to his own character than that of Malchus. This is probably the most important reason for Malchus’ inclusion in the story. He further highlights Peter’s reckless and impulsive behavior [...] Even as a minor player, Malchus adds theological depth to the narrator’s presentation of Peter’s contradictory character as well as the picture of Jesus’ commitment to his mission.” See Skinner, “Malchus: Cutting Up in the Garden (John 18:1–11),” in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Literary Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* (eds., Steven Hunt, D. François Tolmie and Ruben Zimmerman; WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 568–72, here 571, 72.
- 50 I identify this slave as the woman who works as a doorkeeper at the high priest’s courtyard.
- 51 J. Glancy reminds us that “an abuse of a slave was an attack on the slaveholder’s personal dignity.” Glancy, *Slavery*, 12. This rejoins Dale Martin’s comments, although with some cautions, “[T]he well-placed slave of an important woman or man was an important person. It mattered less that one was a slave than whose slave one was.” See Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 35. It mattered a great deal that one was a slave, but Martin’s point is important as he raises the issue of to whom a slave belonged. In all the gospels, Malchus (a male figure) is the only slave who is named. He may have been a known figure, or an important/managerial slave at the service of the high priest. It is plausible Peter may have targeted him directly if Malchus was amongst the crowd to observe Jesus’ arrest and to report to his owner. I am not saying, as Benedict T. Viviano proposed, that Malchus was the deputy of the high priest and that Peter’s action of cutting the slave’s ear was meant to shame the high priest and, *inter alia*, disqualify his deputy for office. See Viviano, “The High Priest’s Ear: Mark 14:47,” *RB* 96 (1989): 71–80.
- 52 Notice that she, like a master, views injury to a family member as injury to herself. Roman law worked thus for slave and free but slave families did not count at law.
- 53 Some slaves may have been bred within the same household, while others were purchased on the slave market; they could have been from diverse ethnic origins or not. See Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Malchus and the female slave doorkeeper could have been from the same ethnic background and they could have developed special bonds.
- 54 This is not an altogether impossible scenario. Close relatives could be married, and slaves living in the same household could set up quasi-marital unions, although the slave-owners had legal prerogatives over their union and could break the family and sell them, or their children, to others for profit. It goes without saying that the domestic slave households were extremely complicated, unstable, vulnerable, based

on the intersectionality of their multiple identities. Jonathan Edmondson states that “the larger the slave household, the greater the number of such unions there might have been at any one time, and the greater the possibility for each slave family to develop more complex bonds of kinship. In such situations, house-bred slaves (*vernae*) might well have had a number of aunts, uncles and cousins, especially on the maternal side.” See Edmondson, “Slavery and the Roman Family,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery, vol. 1. The Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. P. A. Cartledge and K. R. Bradley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 337–361 (here 347).

- 55 See Dale Martin, “Jesus in Jerusalem,” 9–15. See also Craig A. Evans, “Opposition to the Temple: Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed., James H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 235–253.
- 56 The Passion narratives indicate that Jesus was perceived or suspected by those in authority as being a social bandit (Mark 15:1ff; Mark 15:16ff); the sign on the cross clearly pointed to Jesus as a royal pretender to the Jewish throne (Mark 15:26; Matthew 27:37; Luke 23:38; John 19:19).
- 57 One may recall Joel 2:28–29 (LXX 3:1–2) who speaks about how even slaves will prophesy in the last days: καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου.

SLAVES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

This chapter considers two specific slaves, one named (Rhoda, the maid slave in Acts 12:15), and one nameless (the merchants' fortune-telling slave woman in Acts 16:16–18). The former of these slaves was associated with a Christ-believing group, while the other was not. The purpose of highlighting these slaves is to show a pattern of violence (psychological and economic) exhibited in these texts, which assume slaves to be vulnerable to such violence.¹ I work from the premise that violence is not just a matter of actions, but also a matter of words stated within particular societal structures that allow one person or a group of people to ridicule, silence, and hurt others with their words. One may consider the psychosocial impact of violence through language and words, or rhetoric and stereotyping.² I propose to read the narrative of the slave woman in Acts 16 as a mirror story³ of the narrative that mentioned Rhoda briefly, in order to argue that the characterizations of both slaves may provide some clues about Luke's social values and perspectives.⁴ Although the focus is on slaves, it is necessary to acknowledge the gender of these slaves. Rhoda and the other slave in Acts are women. This added dimension in the analysis will help to highlight the gender positionality of Luke. Gender is a relevant analytical grid from which to understand ancient women slaves. It is essential to appreciate the intersectionality of various components such as hierarchy, social status, and economic functions, how these various poles reinforced one another in the articulation of power, as well as how gendered practices and ideology contribute to the depiction and silencing of slaves in the texts.⁵

Violence is also a gendered act. A slave woman was, as other slaves, categorized as a "person/thing"—Justinian refers to slaves as "mortal things" (*res mortales*), and Juvenal derides what he viewed as the ridiculous idea of considering slaves as men [that is, being considered fully human beings] (*Digest* 4.4.2.5)—but a slave woman was still considered beneath a male slave. As Marianne Bjelland Kartzow states, "Seen from the outside, slaves were primarily considered as belonging to the same class, although a slave's gender was not irrelevant. Seen from within, the gender hierarchy reflected that of the broader society in which the male was favored."⁶ A slave woman was

viewed as a childbearing instrument, regardless of the danger associated with breeding, considering how high the rates for maternal and infant mortality were. The most important consideration for the owners was to increase their profits by selling the children born of slaves and for saving cost in not having to buy them. Some slave women were encouraged to breed in order to stabilize male slaves, especially during the Republic and Principate. A slave woman would also serve as wet nurse to breast-feed the children of free women.⁷

It is also important to pay attention to issues of economics. Prominent women and women with a house serving as a meeting place (Acts 12:12; 16:14–15, 40; 17:4, 12) are particularly favored by Luke, whereas slave women are described as being ambiguous and emotionally frantic at best, and a source of frustration at worst. The conclusion to this chapter aligns itself with the overall argument of this project. Far from contesting and subverting the ideals of ancient slavery, slaves served in these narratives as the discursive conduits to advance the agendas of diverse early Christ-groups. Intellectuals associated with these groups pursued social, political, and theological visions with no intrinsic interest in the slaves or in their social/economic situations. The plan of this chapter is as follows. First, I will consider the theme of violence in relation to Rhoda, especially in how she was both abused by the crowd praying for Peter and silenced by Peter himself. Rhoda, however, is surprising as a potentially liberative character, despite her ambiguity. Second, I will show how Paul's silencing of the unnamed fortune-telling slave woman is a form of violence that allows free members like him to pray, preach, and add new members to Christ-believing communities at the expense of the slave woman's prophetic voice and her economic prospects.

5.1 The violence on Rhoda

The episode mentioning Rhoda (Ῥόδη) may be analyzed by focusing on the main characters in the story narrated in Acts 12:1–16, namely, Rhoda, Peter, and the praying crowd.⁸ The story is Peter's;⁹ it begins with him in prison, until he is delivered miraculously by an angel. When he realizes what was happening and that he was not having a vision, he “went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying” (Acts 12:12). The female slave is mentioned in Acts 12:13 by her function: she came to the door of the gateway to answer.¹⁰ She may have been Mary's slave, whose house was large enough to hold many people who have gathered there to pray (οἱ ἦσαν ἱκανοὶ συνηθροισμένοι καὶ προσευχόμενοι). Alternatively, she may have been the slave of someone else present in the prayer meeting who ordered her to go to find out who was knocking at the gate.¹¹ Rhoda recognized (ἐπηγνούσα) Peter's voice; she was overjoyed (ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς) (12:14), but she did not open the gate to let him in. Instead, she went on to report to the crowd that it was Peter standing at the gate and knocking. The crowd first scolds her and calls

her crazy—"But they said to her: You are out of your mind!" (οἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπαν Μαίνῃ) (12:15),¹² but she does not let herself be dissuaded easily. She continues talking (ἡ δὲ δι᾽ ὀχλοῦ οὕτως ἔχειν), insisting it was really Peter she heard standing and knocking at the gateway. The second tactic the crowd used against her was to believe illusion as opposed to the report of a slave: "It is his angel!" (Ὁ ἄγγελός ἐστιν αὐτοῦ) (12:15). Thus far, it is only Rhoda who has a clear sense of reality, yet she is the one who is labeled mad. She persisted in talking about whose voice she recognized at the gate. The crowd gathered to pray; they could not believe that whoever the slave maid (παιδίσκη) heard was the real flesh-and-blood Peter. They are the ones doubting, while she is the one who recognized the disciple's voice and who proclaimed the good news of Peter's "resurrection" from the dead and escape from imminent execution.¹³

There is an interesting parallel between Rhoda's inconceivable/"mad" announcement (ἀπήγγειλεν) and the "nonsense" announcement of Jesus' resurrection made by the women in Luke 24.¹⁴ In both cases, female figures are categorized as deviants, spewing silly and maddening speech. Peter believed in Jesus' resurrection only after going to the empty tomb himself (24:11–12). The irony in Acts 12 is that Peter is the one typifying Jesus, or better, Peter is the one symbolically reliving Jesus' experience, standing as the one delivered from death. However, the woman who heard his voice and testified to his "resurrection" from a Roman prison is scorned until the crowd of witnesses was able to see him and hear his account of his deliverance.

The rhetorical function of Rhoda in the narrative universe of Luke plays an important theological role, as she was the one who heard, was overjoyed, and subsequently proclaimed the good news of Peter's presence to those who judged her mentally unfit to perceive reality accurately. The crowd exercised violence against her by publicly shaming and ridiculing her.¹⁵ By ignoring Rhoda, ridiculing her, and going about their activities while she continued to speak, her fellow Christ-believing members rendered her invisible. This in itself is a form of violence and abuse. Despite her physical voice being present, it was silenced by their refusal to give any credence to her voice. By doing so, the crowd participated in the violence done to Peter as they spoke, as it were, with the voice of the oppressor/opposing party leaving him still out. The whole pericope started when "Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also" (12:1–3). The slave woman has played the role of the "in-between" presence at the outer gate (πυλῶνος) of the house between the world outside tainted by the violence of the empire, and the world inside Mary's house composed of a large number of people (ἱκανοί) who were praying.¹⁶ The two worlds are not systematically separated since the effects of Herod's violence are what prompted the crowd to gather and pray. The crowd itself is not immune from mimicking some of the violence of the empire by its use of mockery and

verbal abuse against one of their own, though it was one who belonged to one of them as a commodity. Rhoda was thus one whose testimony and presence could be violated.

The theme of violence is present from the beginning of the narrative. Important members of the community have been killed and Peter was next in line to satisfy the spectacle of violence and shame displayed by the empire. The goal of such violent deeds was to please the Jewish religious leaders (12:3). Peter was kept in prison until after the Passover to bring him out to the people (12:4), presumably to be mocked, flogged, and killed. The irony in this narrative is that Peter will be brought out to a group of people, but not to the crowd intended by the imperial power. He will instead be brought out by a messenger of the Lord (ἄγγελος κυρίου, 12:8) to the group of people who were earnestly praying at Mary's house. Yet, when he goes to them and knocks at the gateway, there is also mockery and verbal aggression (a form of violence), though not death. The mockery and the public spectacle of shame is not exercised against Peter, but against a slave woman (Rhoda) who recognized his voice and who was delighted/exuberated (ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς) at hearing him at the door.

Furthermore, the irony continues with the mention of an angel. First, the text stipulates it was an angel or a messenger who came to free Peter from the Roman jail. Peter, even in the process of being liberated, thought he was dreaming; he doubted the reality of what was happening to him. Second, the crowd at Mary's house kept saying to Rhoda it was an angel she saw (Ὁ ἄγγελός ἐστιν αὐτοῦ, 12:15)—Peter's guardian angel, his celestial double, but not Peter himself.¹⁷ What she was announcing was not true; she was out of her mind, mistaken, or confused. In the midst of Peter's liberation and his standing at the door and knocking, Rhoda the slave woman is continuously enslaved by the crowd mocking her, blaming her for such outrageous report, and shaming her as a public spectacle.¹⁸ In this manner, the praying crowd plays the role of the Roman forum Peter was intended to face by demonstrating its thirst for violence against vulnerable bodies.

Another ironic element involves Peter's persistent standing at the door and knocking.¹⁹ He wanted this crowd of praying believers to witness that he was alive and well. His liberation happened on the night of Passover²⁰ by the work of an angel of life; he needed to hurry up and move away from his space of confinement. When they finally opened up the gateway—the narrative does not indicate whether it was because of being exhausted with the voice of the slave woman, by possibly and finally believing her, or by wishing to silence her by examining the evidence—they saw Peter, and they were amazed/astonished (εἶδαν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξέστησαν) (12:16). From this point, Peter takes charge. His presentation is that of someone with full control of his importance. Rhoda's hysterical demeanor is contrasted with Peter's presentation and gesture.²¹ Like a Roman character on a theater stage, he motioned to the crowd with his hand to be silent (κατασεισας δὲ αὐτοῖς τῇ χειρὶ σιγᾶν) and

allow him to perform and relate, “How the Lord has brought him out (ἐξήγαγεν) of prison” (12:17).²² Peter’s performance functions to silence. He silences the crowd, as well as the voice of Rhoda the slave woman who first heard his voice and believed it was truly him standing and knocking at the gate. The narrative begins with Peter and it ends with him. F. Scott Spencer is worth quoting:

It is *Peter’s voice* which ultimately persuades. He not only appears alive before the confused assembly, but motions for them “to be silent” and “describe[s]” for them the details of his deliverance (12:17). In the process, Peter silences Rhoda as well and effectively usurps her role as witness. Recalling, too, that from the very start Rhoda’s testimony was based on “recognizing Peter’s voice” (12:14), we find her word being wholly bracketed (stifled) by Peter’s in the story.²³

Rhoda the slave maid is silenced so that Peter can recount what happened to him and play his role of commissioning the crowd. Peter’s interest is not in Mary, the hostess, nor in Rhoda, who has proven herself a faithful and reliable witness to his presence at the gateway, in spite of the ridicule she had to endure.²⁴ Instead, Peter wants the crowd to tell the stories he has just shared with the male authorities: “Tell these things to James and to the brothers” (12:17). Peter, after assuring himself his story/his good news (gospel) will be shared with a leading authority (James, probably “the brother of the Lord”) and with the brothers, he then departs and goes to another place (12:17), while Rhoda is forgotten.

What I will do now is to try to illustrate the parallel between Luke’s Jesus and Peter using Table 5.1, while making some brief preliminary remarks regarding the narrativial function of the παιδίσκη, Rhoda.²⁵

The columns highlighting the appearances of extraordinary figures, as well as the columns mentioning the empty tomb and the empty prison, are not lined up on top of each other because of the sequence in the narratives. Otherwise, the parallels between the two stories hold. Notice the mention of Peter’s angel (Peter’s ghost) in Acts 12:15 in comparison to the disciples thinking they saw Jesus’ spirit (Jesus’ ghost) in Luke 24:36–37. Jesus needed to reassure them he was not a disembodied spirit but a flesh-and-blood being by asking them to give him food and drink so they could be persuaded. With regard to the angelic figures, one may also notice that if indeed an angel or messenger was with Peter and liberated him from prison, it was not Peter’s alleged guardian angel that kept on knocking at the outer gate of Mary’s house and whose voice Rhoda recognized.²⁶ The two men in radiant clothes at the tomb in Luke may well have been angelic/spirit beings. Luke’s Jesus, however, wants to assure his audience he was not an incorporeal spiritual being. But, if Peter needed to knock at the door, Jesus just showed up in the

Table 5.1

Jesus	Empty tomb (Luke 24:3)	Two men in radiant clothes at the tomb (Luke 24:4)	The women came back from the tomb and reported to the Eleven all the things that happened (Luke 24:9)	The gathering apostles deemed the women mad, because their words seemed to them like nonsense (Luke 24:11)	Peter ran to the empty tomb, and saw the strap of linen lying by themselves. He went away, wondering to himself what had happened (Luke 24:12)	Jesus appeared in the room where the disciples gathered, and they were afraid they saw a spirit (Luke 24:36–37)	Jesus blesses the disciples and commissioned them (Luke 24:44–51)	Jesus left them and was taken up to heaven (Luke 24:51)
Peter	An angel appeared in the prison and a light shone in the cell (Acts 12:7)	Empty prison (Acts 12:19)	Rhoda ran inside to announce to the crowd that Peter was present at the gate (Acts 12:14)	The gathering crowd deemed the slave mad (Acts 12:15)	The crowd referred to whatever the slave maid saw as Peter's angel (Acts 12:15)	The crowd only acknowledged Peter's presence only after they saw him; they were astonished (Acts 12:16)	Peter commissioned the crowd to tell these things to the male authority figures (Acts 12:17)	Peter departed and went to another place (Acts 12:17)

middle of his disciples where they gathered in a room; there is no need for a slave to come to the door to recognize Jesus' voice; rather, he invades the space of those inside the house. The women in Luke seem to play a role similar to Rhoda's. In both narratives, women hear the message and proclaim it. In both stories, they are perceived by a crowd as incoherent.²⁷ The stories end after Luke situates the heroes Jesus and Peter in a different realm, or in a secured place.²⁸ The specific locale where the disciples are, that is, the city where Mary's house is located, will continue to experience Herod's power and arrogance in terrorizing peoples' lives until the text assures the hearers/readers that God himself put an end to Herod's megalomania (Acts 12:19–28). However, as far as Rhoda is concerned, the text seems to leave her in her slave-like condition, presented as stupid, illogical, mad, and unable to control her exuberance. Therefore, Rhoda needed to be silenced not only by the crowd,²⁹ but also by the beloved leader Peter, who needed to depart after assuring his recent extraordinary experience of freedom from bondage will be reported to James and the brothers. The brethren will be able to articulate to the faithful the magnificent power of God over the imperial show of strength. In the end, God wins; his word, through his (mostly male) messengers, "continued to increase and spread" (Acts 12:23). In the end, Rhoda's voice is rendered silent and invisible.³⁰ It is possible that Rhoda did not even exist as a real historical person; rather, she was simply invented by Luke to play a particular character.³¹ In the heroic figures of Jesus and Peter in Luke and Acts, a certain ghostly quality was attached to them by the crowd of believers in both narratives. The heroes, however, were able to exorcise these interpretations of who they were. They are not spirits; they are talking and eating male leaders. Rhoda, in texts and interpretation of texts, seems to be the one upon whom the ghostly and haunting spirit was finally able to enter and take possession; maybe she was just a ghost.³² By dusting off the ghost, that is, by trying to understand an intriguing and evasive character named Rhoda, and calibrate her narrational position anew in the genealogy of earliest Christ-groups, modern readers may allow her to speak again and be a witness to truth. In our own social and political messiness, we may rejoice with her and others in spontaneous running to announce some good news upon hearing the voice of a beloved brother or sister rescued from the jaws of death.

5.2 Rhoda as ... Cassandra?

Dennis R. MacDonald offers a radical reading of Rhoda that is worth considering at some length. He proposes to consider the Lukan narrative as a Homeric imitation.³³ He argues that Rhoda's recognition of Peter's voice at the outer gate in Acts 12:13–14 resembles Cassandra's recognition of Priam in *Iliad* 24.697 and 703–706.³⁴ He shows that "the parallels between Acts 12 and *Iliad* 24 are so extensive and in some cases distinctive that one should consider literary contact not only plausible but likely."³⁵

In Table 5.2 is part of the common materials in the two texts as highlighted by MacDonald.

If one follows MacDonald's intertextual analysis, there is indeed certain correspondence between Priam/Peter and Cassandra/Rhoda. Then if one focuses on the pair Cassandra/Rhoda, what can they learn from what Luke was doing with Rhoda?³⁶ MacDonald points out he is not alluding to the Cassandra myth as a whole, but to a particular instance in *Iliad* 24.699 where Cassandra is related in a unique way to the goddess Aphrodite: "Cassandra, peer of golden Aphrodite, Κασσάνδρη, ἱκέλη χρυσέη Αφροδίστη," who "was closely identified with the rose, a signature for her in art."³⁷ The association between Cassandra and Rhoda then becomes clearer, in following MacDonald's analysis, especially considering that the name Rhoda/Ρόδη itself refers to "Rose." Cassandra's relationship with the imagery of "roses," in relation to her inability to persuade others, and the fact she is often viewed as mad is paralleled with Rhoda/Rose, considered mad by those inside the house. This rapprochement may, indeed, point to a dimension in the text that may have escaped us thus far. Now back to the question asked prior: What was Luke doing with Rhoda/Rose if we accept the premise he was effectively imitating Homer?³⁸ MacDonald suggests that Luke, in imitating and interpreting the Homeric tale, aims to improve it also: "The tale in the *Iliad* ends with the tragic burial of Hector's corpse. The tale in Acts ends with rejoicing at Mary's house that their prayers for Peter's release had been answered."³⁹ This intriguing reading of associating Rhoda to Cassandra, if it is what Luke was doing, invites one to probe Rhoda's function in the text a bit further by placing Rhoda in parallel with the single Homeric line placing Cassandra in similarity to Aphrodite.

Table 5.2

<i>Iliad</i> 24	<i>Acts</i> 12:11–17
[After opening the gates Priam learned that his companion was a god. Having revealed his identity, "Hermes went off to high Olympus" (460–468; 694.)	After Peter escaped from the prison, the angel left him. Only then did the apostle "know for certain that the Lord sent his angel."
Priam proceeded to Troy (696–697).	Peter proceeded to the home of Mary.
Cassandra saw Priam approaching and went to tell the others (697–706).	Rhoda heard Peter knocking at the door, recognized his voice, and went to tell the others.
Cassandra was often considered mad.	Those inside the house thought Rhoda mad.
Priam waited outside the gate (707–717).	Peter waited outside the gate.
Finally, the gates opened and the Trojans continued their wailing (718–722).	≠ Finally, the gate opened and told them what wonderful things "the Lord" had done.

Cassandra, “peer to Golden Aphrodite,” the goddess of roses is, surprisingly, not a prophetic figure in Homeric epic; she has prophetic gifts in Aeschylus’ drama, *Agamemnon*.⁴⁰ In *Iliad*, however, she was the first to recognize (εἰσε- νόησεν) Priam, her dear father, upon returning the body of Hector to Troy (24.699). Rhoda also recognized (ἐπιγνοῦσα) Peter. One may continue to explore the Homeric imitation proposed by MacDonald by developing certain literary imagination as in Table 5.3.

In this reading, Rhoda/Rose may be interpreted as a (spiritual) daughter to Peter, in case she was also a Christ-believer; she was one who was perceptive, and who announced good news. She offered good news as a delightful aroma to those in the house. However, she was perceived as mad. They tried to crush her spirit but, like a rose, she continued to offer her perfume. She rejoiced and continued to announce the good news of Peter’s presence (his resurrection). In this sense, one may even imagine her singing a song similar to Mary’s song in Luke 1:46–48a: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior for he has been mindful of the humble state of his slave (τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ).”⁴¹ In the house of another Mary, Rhoda, in a theological imagination, can be seen as singing Mary’s song to welcome one who is like Jesus, a disciple of Jesus who is like a father to her. In her humble condition as a slave woman, she can still proclaim good tidings. Furthermore, if in the Homeric tale death has victory and Cassandra is wailing, in the Lukan narrative, however, death does not have the last word; life does, and God prevails in the end. This may again be related to the Magnificat: “He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted the humble” (Luke 1:52). This would relate neatly with the episode of how God has brought Herod down from his throne in Acts 12:21–23. Theologically, this reading makes sense. Read this way Rhoda, the rose, is no longer simply a slave woman used by Luke as a literary character to assume comedic qualities; she takes the dimension of an

Table 5.3

<i>Priam</i>	<i>Peter</i>
Cassandra	Rhoda
Daughter to Priam	Slave woman (a spiritual daughter to Peter?)
Perceived as mad	Perceived as mad
Recognized her father when he comes back	Recognized Peter (her spiritual father?) when he comes back
Wailed and shouted throughout all the city: Come and see Hector, men and women of Troy, if you ever rejoiced when he was alive and returned from battle, for he was a great source of joy to the city and to all the people	Rejoiced and shouted throughout all the house: Peter is at the door! (for he was a great source of joy to all who gathered in the house)

important theological figure that comes to disturb one's reading and interpretation of the text.⁴²

5.3 Surprised by Rhoda

I started this section of the chapter with my usual intellectual skepticism and armed with a hermeneutic of suspicion. The first half of the writing testifies to that entry into the narrative. As I worked, I allowed the text to guide me to strange and uncharted territories. Then I discovered the spirit of Rhoda, namely, her ghostly character. It is unclear whether she was a historical person or a product of Luke's imagination, or even whether she was simply the theological playfulness of Luke in his literary imitation based on a particular sub-point of a Homeric epic. Rhoda appears briefly in the scene before disappearing. Maybe she was just a stock *serva currens*, maybe she was not. After the death of Herod, the narrator concludes the Petrine half of the book (chapters 1–12). MacDonald draws the attention to the fact that the narrator of *Iliad* also concludes the heroic and long poem with the rescue of Hector's corpse and his burial.⁴³ Luke also concludes the first half of Acts with the narrative of Peter's return from the theater of death and recognition by Rhoda. Perhaps Luke was hinting to his ancient readers/listeners to pay attention to the imitation and improvement on the model he was doing. However, it is not even clear that Luke himself depicted Rhoda the slave woman fully. I am certain I have not understood her fully either, but I remain surprised by her. Was she made to be completely silenced by Peter's voice? What are the sites of violence in the text and in interpretations of the text vis-à-vis Rhoda? Why is it that commentators seldom give Rhoda her due? In the second half of Acts (chapters 13–28), Luke's Paul, exacerbated by the voice of another persistent and intriguing slave woman, reacted and essentially told her to shut up. To this story I now turn.

The mirror story

I propose to consider the narrative mentioning the slave woman in Acts 16:16–19 as a mirror story of the narrative mentioning Rhoda. The mirror story echoes the first narrative, without reproducing it exactly. It has its particularities and contours, but it also contains elements that lead to other possibilities. The (re)created/(re)imagined and (re)visited story articulates its own sensibilities. In other words, one story plays the role of a mirror reflection of the other, albeit with some twists. The relevance of reading these two characters in parallel is to allow a better understanding of how Luke deploys his social and theological agenda concerning the slave women.⁴⁴ Luke deploys the second narrative to address and clarify certain points left hanging in ambiguity. Luke is playing with narrative A by redeploying it anew in narrative B, placing the two narratives in conversation. All the principal elements

are present in both places: jail, prayer in the middle of the night, a female slave, deliverance by God, silencing of the slave, and violence.⁴⁵ This proposal leads me to argue that the second story aims to resolve some of the tensions we encountered with the elusive image of Rhoda. In story B, the case for the appropriate space for a slave woman is closed. In the second narrative, the tone of how Christ-believing communities may negotiate their relations to the empire is more nuanced. Paul, in the end, is mentioned as a Roman citizen in a Roman colony, albeit he was also a victim of violence. I will proceed thus. First, I will highlight the common elements in the narratives and probe what they might mean in understanding Luke's social values and perspectives. Second, I will consider the violence done on the slave woman in order to understand her place in the broader narrative. Luke's Paul has no patience and/or interest in the social and economic realities the slave woman is embroiled in; Luke's Paul is concerned with saving the Roman jailer and his household, but he does not show any interest in the salvation of the slave woman.

The two women are presented the same way. Verse 16 of Acts 16 situates the temporal clause of what is to unfold: "And it happened as we were going to the place of prayer" (Ἐγένετο δὲ πορευομένων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν). It is not important, at least as far as the argument to be made goes, to know who belongs to the "we."⁴⁶ What is of importance to my analysis is the mention of a group and of "prayer." In Acts 12:5, we also have a group and the mention of prayer (προσευχὴ δὲ ἦν ἐκτενῶς γινομένη ὑπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας πρὸς τὸν θεὸν περὶ αὐτοῦ).⁴⁷ What comes next in 16:16 is that the crowd that was on its way to prayer is met by a certain slave woman (τινὰ παιδίσκην). Rhoda also is identified as a παιδίσκη (Acts 12:13). The difference so far between the two slave maids is that we know the name of one (παιδίσκη ὀνόματι Ῥόδη), whereas the second is nameless (τινὰ παιδίσκην).⁴⁸ However, both are prophetesses;⁴⁹ both are able to perceive or to recognize particular voices. Rhoda recognized Peter's voice and announced to the crowd that Peter was standing at the door (14); the nameless slave woman who had a spirit of prophecy,⁵⁰ by which she predicted the future (ἔχουσαν πνεῦμα πύθωνα, 16:16), also recognized Paul and the others. She followed them and she kept on announcing/crying out (ἔκραζεν) the presence of not only the leading figure (Paul), but also the crowd with him: "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation" (NRSV) (Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου εἰσίν, οἵτινες καταγγέλλουσιν ὑμῖν ὁδὸν σωτηρίας, 16:17). There are two remarks that need to be made at this juncture: first, the element of insistence. There is an urging element in both announcements, although the insistence functions differently in the two episodes. Both slave women kept on announcing the message they had. In the first story, it is the insisted announcement concerning one particular figure (Peter) to the praying crowd; in the second, it is the insisted announcement regarding one particular figure (Paul) and those with him, as they were on their way to prayer, to a larger

(citywide) group.⁵¹ In both stories, there is an element of excitement. Rhoda was overjoyed; the nameless slave maid was ecstatic.⁵² The perception of both slave women by the observing crowd is the same: madness! Like Rhoda she is unable to control herself.

There is a strange temporal element in the second narrative worth noticing: “She kept this up for many days” (16:18). What is strange is that in verse 16 we read that the group was on its way *εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν*. In verse 18, the slave maid kept her message loud and clear concerning *οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι*. It has been many days since they departed and the mantic slave woman has followed them. Are they now at the place of prayer? Are they becoming more annoyed by her because they cannot concentrate on praying? If they were at *τὴν προσευχὴν* at this point then we can point out a similarity to the previous story we considered. In relation to the story of Rhoda, she too entered the place of prayer and disturbed them with her announcement. In the narrative about Peter’s deliverance, the crowd became annoyed by Rhoda’s insistence that Peter was at the door; they reprimanded her and theologized about what might explain the voice she heard. She occupied this liminal space of being in the house and “standing at the gate.” She bothered them, because she was mad; they needed to go back to prayer. If the nameless slave maid is at the prayer meeting where Paul and his company are,⁵³ then she was “both radically other than and, potentially, dangerously close to the free citizen.”⁵⁴ Paul became irritated; he had no more patience with her. Regardless of the right message she was articulating, they needed to go *εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν*. Finally, Paul became greatly troubled (*διαπονηθεὶς*, 16:18), that is, he became disturbed, vexed, distressed, annoyed, grieved, bothered, and angry. He apparently lost his temper, turned around, and addressed the spirit in her. The spirit in the woman, as described in the text, identified Paul and the men with him as “slaves of the Most High God” (*δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου*), that is, the supreme God who occupies the upper echelon in the pyramid of gods; these men are his slaves, and they are associated with him.⁵⁵ The spirit in the slave woman kept on crying this for many days (*πολλὰς ἡμέρας*), and she may have been perceived by Paul and the others as a crazy woman (inhabited by the spirit of Python, which is never labeled an unclean or evil spirit in the text),⁵⁶ who was trying to push them to occupy the realm of madness where she was. In other words, the spirit in her makes her lose her identity; she does not live in the real world, and that spirit was trying to push them to the point of insanity with her constant mantic pronouncements, although what she was saying was in accord with Luke’s overall theology. Considering the aspect of the slave being possessed by a spirit of divination, one may resist the rhetorical force of such portrayal. The slave is rhetorically demonized in order for Paul’s anger to channel in an anesthetized way. Thus Paul in turning towards the slave maid, although he still does not see her, nor does he recognize her as a woman prophet, rebuked the spirit in her. What he saw was a possessed slave woman who was annoying him, and he said to the spirit: “In the name

of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” (18). One may sympathize with the apostle and understand his reaction as a tired person. However, if the overall goal of Luke is the preaching of the gospel to all (Acts 1:8), there is no textual indication of any engagement on the part of Paul with the slave woman in trying to present to her the message of the Way (9:2; 18:25; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Paul preached to the jailer; he preached to the “proper” women, but not to the “nagging-then-exorcised” nameless slave woman. She is silenced instead. No longer will we hear the voice of the unnamed slave in the text. In fact, no longer in Acts will we hear a slave’s voice.

In relation to slaves, Luke’s narrative moves from a named slave maid, who was associated with a Christ-group, to a nameless slave woman, with no association with an important figure or community. It is as if Luke, like his Paul, is frustrated with the presence of prophetic slave women around and following Christ-believing members. It is as if in the mirror story, the “slave problem” is resolved with the silencing of the nameless slave. It seems that Luke imitates and improves on the model of Rhoda by characterizing the nameless enslaved woman with less ambiguity. Luke’s socio-political work in the second-century Roman world was filled with ambiguities that required him to live and negotiate various tensions. His theological-historical memory is peppered with great figures that have been killed by local representatives of the Roman Empire (e.g., Jesus, Peter, Paul). He needed to portray the Most High God as the Jewish God without alienating any Roman who would like to be part of the movement, or without pushing Roman authorities that value order and stability to consider this growing and diverse movement of which he was a part any threat to the proper functioning of the empire; he did not want the movement of the Way to be seen as suspicious of manufacturing any subversive social and political activities.⁵⁷ Luke needed to provide his readers/hearers, reading over Theophilus’ shoulder—especially those most “excellent” (κράτιστε)⁵⁸ Roman readers and potential urban patrons, who might be in a position to shape and influence Roman policy—with a reason for the presence of Christ-believing communities in the Roman world, and to communicate to them what that presence entails exactly. Luke also needed to reassure Theophilus (his Roman patron), and other Christ-believing members of what they have been taught. It was necessary for him to address plausible concerns they might have had regarding the delay of the *Parousia* and his announcement of the full establishment of God’s reign (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6). He was also obligated to present and address questions from intelligent readers about the relations that existed between the Christ-followers and Judaism, with both groups claiming to belong to the same (Jewish) Most High God and sharing the same tradition. Would that imply due Roman protection to those being a part of the *new* (suspicious) movement, as that was the case for the adherents of the *old* (well-established) ritual traditions of Judaism? The Roman policy of *mos maiorum* (ancient traditions/ancestral customs) implied respect for established traditions and their incorporations into the overarching political and

cultural landscape of the Roman Empire.⁵⁹ The text of Acts also gives hints of the various stances Luke was trying to adopt with regard to a variety of topics (e.g., his ambiguities and ambivalences regarding empire),⁶⁰ but in terms of his presentations of slave women his verdict is clear: silenced! The nameless slave woman has been silenced, and that is the end to it.

So far, I have identified the elements of prayer, slave, and of silencing a slave woman in both narratives. What I will do next is to consider various levels and sites of violence in the text before I consider a few other elements of similarity in both narratives.

5.4 Violence on the fortune-telling slave

Another point worth considering is that the mantic prowess of this nameless slave woman brought her Roman owners much profit (ἐργασίαν πολλήν παρέῖχεν τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῆς, Acts 16:16). Divination needs to be put in specific contexts. It cannot be divorced from the social, economic, and political realities. As Sarah I. Johnston states, “Whatever our ancient sources may claim about the greater powers that enabled it to work—gods, demons, the cosmos itself—divination is an utterly human art, behind which one can glimpse not only the rules that participants have developed for its engagement, but also the rules by which participants assume (or hope) that the world works.”⁶¹ In other words, it is important to understand divination in the context of human beings involved in interpreting and assigning signs. Thus whatever the text of Acts might tell us about the spirit of divination that inhabited the unnamed slave woman must be probed out of the construction of the social actors of that setting by a historian of antiquity. It is insufficient and simply too easy to merely adopt an emic attitude and definition related to a phenomenon such as ancient divination. An etic attitude and definition is necessary, without denying the necessity to probe how the phenomenon is lived and understood from within. I do not make a distinction between prophecy and divination; both are channels for articulating signs. In this sense prophecy is a method of divination (interpreting perceived signs from the supernatural), which implies that prophets were the transmitters of some verbal signs that needed interpretation. This is why I consider the slave in the text as a woman prophet. I work from the etic definition of ancient divination proposed by Kim Beerden:

Divination is the human action of production—by means of evocation or observation and recognition—and subsequent interpretation of signs attributed to the supernatural. These signs can be anything which the supernatural is perceived to place in the world with the intention to communicate, whether evoked or unprovoked, whether visible, auditory, tactile, olfactory or gustatory: in all cases the individual must recognize a sign as coming from the supernatural in order to consider it as a divinatory sign.⁶²

John Dillery has tried to establish a difference between a prophet and a *mantis* (diviner). A prophet, in his attempt at separating the two terms, would be someone usually attached to a specific god at a particular cult site, whereas a diviner would be an “independent” figure possessing similar abilities, but not attached to a specific cult. However, he concedes the terms are much more flexible and interchangeable and that “one should not expect exactitude in this distinction.”⁶³ Much more important to our analysis is Dillery’s convincing argument that ancient diviners were always straddling between worlds and spaces, negotiating between being “in”—counseling kings and members of the elite—and “out,” never fully fitting “in”—remaining constantly under surveillance—and always belonging at the margins of the society within which they operated.⁶⁴ Building from this insight, we can consider the maid slave with the spirit of divination in Acts 16 as someone at the margin of society but serving those firmly established at its center. As a slave, she lives a liminal reality; she occupies a liminal space. She is always under the gaze of τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῆς, while she plays the role of an “in-between” agent between worlds. In her proclamation regarding Paul and the others, she also situates herself as a bridge between spaces: “These people are slaves of the Most High God! They announce to you a way of salvation!” (16:17). She is inviting others in her city to pay attention. It is as if she is rhetorically and strategically located at the border, or metaphorically stationed at the city gate, announcing the presence of those who come to proclaim something special to her city. The imageries of someone playing the function of “bridge” between spaces and “standing at the gate” echo the positioning of Rhoda we considered earlier.

Paul, his companions, or the crying-out slave, all participated in a world full of gods;⁶⁵ all breathed and moved in worlds full of signs. Paul and his men thought they operated from one spirit, which he qualifies as τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. This particular spirit seems to have prevented him from preaching the word in the province of Asia (16:6).⁶⁶ Paul, in his encounter with the nameless maid slave, entered in a battle of spirits—engaging the one guiding him with the one enabling the slave woman to make predictions and, *inter alia*, enabling her owners to make a fortune at her expense. In this real human drama where the spirits are confronted, the itinerant preacher is described as having the upper hand: “At that moment it [the spirit] left her” (ἐξῆλθεν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρα, 18). Paul’s action on the nameless slave woman/prophetess/diviner will threaten the apparent stability of various spaces, that of her owners, as well as that of Paul himself. Her fate remains unknown; that of Paul (and the crowd with him) is prison for allegedly throwing the city into uproar by promoting foreign Jewish customs (Acts 16:20).

The text goes beyond the supernatural to consider the real social and economic dimension around the possession of a particular spirit of divination (19–26).⁶⁷ The slave’s body is the property of her owners, and so are her spirit, intellect, and her understanding of how to move around and through various

worlds. She has prophetic gifts, but her abilities to sift through a semiotic system of invoking signs (gleaning information), and of decoding and understanding, or interpreting the signs, are not to her own profit—"whatever is acquired through the slave, is acquired for the master," states the law (Gaius, *Institutes* 1.52). The slave maid is bound by socio-economic forces, while trying to navigate and negotiate her psycho-spiritual conditionings.⁶⁸ She exists for others; her body and the spirit inhabiting her function only—or primarily—for the benefit of others.⁶⁹ Paul did not expel the spirit from the woman because he wanted to offer her the freedom to be herself and freed from the oppressive power of her owners.⁷⁰ He was simply annoyed by being followed for days by a persistent woman whom he perceived as possessed and was proclaiming to all in the city who he and his associates were and what their mission was. He did not offer her any message of salvation. Her abilities to maneuver and to mediate between shifting signs were stopped by Paul, who still had his ἅγιον πνεῦμα and could continue to operate in both the supernatural and physical realms. It is true the slave woman was exploited by her owners, but we do not know how the operations of divination she performed were damaging to her own self. What Paul did to her in casting out the Pythian spirit was, as observed by some scholars, to put her out of work.⁷¹ Paul did not seem to care that she had to do this to survive. He silenced her and put an end to her ability to navigate these worlds. In this sense, Paul also participated in the violence perpetuated against this slave woman. He rendered her useless to her owners, and therefore vulnerable by silencing the spirit of prophecy that operated within her. She had become a dejected body;⁷² she would have to reinvent herself very quickly in order to survive the economic and social violence that surrounds and engulfs her, or otherwise be embraced by an alternative community like Lydia's "house-assembly"; however, there is no indication of that.⁷³ On the one hand, if Rhoda were silenced, she at least would still have a social role of being a slave in the house of Mary, or belonging to someone else from that specific Christ-group. The nameless slave woman on the other hand, risks losing her place in the house of her oppressors or in any house, as she may now be perceived as a commodity without any value, and therefore lacks any value for selling or trading. She could be faulted and be severely beaten, if not even be killed, for having allowed the supernatural force of a stranger to usurp her fortune-telling abilities and thereby jeopardize the economic profits of local merchants in a Roman city. The slave woman who proclaimed that these people are slaves of the Most High God announcing "a way of salvation" (ὁδὸν σωτηρίας), as far as the narrative goes, did not enter into any salvation offered by Paul and his people. A Roman soldier and his household will (16:33).

In the text depicting Rhoda, Peter encounters the slave woman at the gate after being delivered from prison by an angel. In Acts 16, Paul goes to prison after his encounter with the slave woman. In both stories, the slave maids are sandwiched between the principal protagonists, their incarceration, and their

deliverance. In the first story, it is the quiet work of a messenger of the Lord and in the second, a violent earthquake (God's natural envoy), that allows their freedom. In the story involving Rhoda, Peter went inside Mary's house and described to them "how the Lord had brought him out of prison" (πῶς ὁ κύριος αὐτὸν ἐξήγαγεν ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς, 12:17). In the other story, God is presumed as the agent who brought Paul out and the jailer brought (ἀναγαγόν) him and all the others into his house (16:34). The movement from story A to story B is the common space of prison, but Paul moves out of prison to enter in the house of a Roman soldier. Slightly later in the narrative (16:37), Paul reveals he is someone with social dignity; not a slave, that is. Luke places him as one who does not need to go out and find a safe place—albeit he is, in police procedural language, "made secured/safe" (ἀσφαλῶς, ἡσφαλίσατο, 16:23–24) in the prison—but as one who is registered in the political system as a Roman citizen.⁷⁴ Luke's Paul completes the loop. Although Paul is a victim of (imperial) violence he is also part of it; he and all the others with him enter the house of an imperial agent. The prophecy of the slave is accomplished in their announcing a way of salvation, although the beneficiary to this particular way is a Roman soldier and his whole family. If in the first story there is ambiguity in the characterization of the woman slave, who might be perceived by some Roman readers and hearers as challenging normal family norms, in the second narrative such readers may rest assured that a slave woman has no such prerogatives. She has been dealt with categorically. The message of the Christ-groups in the empire is not being proclaimed by mad slave women. A reasonable Roman citizen of Jewish background proclaims such a way of salvation; a Roman soldier and his family are proof others like them can receive such message and be part of the movement. As a matter of fact, Luke makes this rhetorical strategy explicit a chapter later: "Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few leading women/wives of the leading men" (γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων, Acts 17:4), and "Many of the Jews believed, as did a number of prominent Greek women (τῶν Ἑλληνίδων γυναικῶν τῶν εὐσημόνων) and many Greek men" (Acts 17:12).⁷⁵

In both texts, the violence of empire is readily apparent. In the first story, Herod is the center of power and he is thirsty for blood; important members of the Christ-adherent groups are killed and put in jail. In the second story, the imperial violence manifests itself in the magistrates, who ordered Paul and Silas (first time identified, only after Paul's reaction to the slave, 16:19) to be stripped and beaten, like vulnerable slaves, when the owners of the slave woman dragged them to the authorities. The violence against the itinerant preachers is matched by a "violent earthquake" (σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας, 16:26). In the first story, Herod ordered the guards to be executed after finding out Peter was no longer in the cell (12:19). In the second story, the jailer responsible for guarding the prisoners was about to kill himself when all the doors were opened as a result of the earthquake since he thought the

prisoners had escaped. He knew his fate would be sealed. The ruthlessness of the empire is felt by everyone. Paul's loud words to the guard were: "Do not harm yourself! We are all here" (16:28). In contrast, Paul himself has already harmed the slave woman by silencing her, and by interfering with the property rights of the owners in damaging their valuable speaking tool and instrument of production.⁷⁶ As we showed in the previous story, those inside Mary's house were not immune from the rhetoric of violence either in the act of mocking and verbally abusing Rhoda. Here the narrative places Paul as shouting to the jailer not to harm himself as if to signify a prophetic cry against self-inflicting violence the system might push one to engage in.⁷⁷ His loud shout might also be envisaged as a sort of plea for the stream of killing to stop. As it happens, Luke no longer reports the killing of anyone else in Acts.⁷⁸

The story concludes as Paul and his friends have a meal at the jailer's house. The magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order to release Paul and the others with him. Paul, however, is not willing to let the magistrates off the hook so easily. He declares he and Silas are Roman citizens (ἄνθρώπους Ῥωμαίους), and they should not have been treated as they have—publicly shamed, beaten, chained, and imprisoned without a trial—essentially, as slaves. The officers and the magistrates became alarmed and tried to appease Paul, the Roman. Paul left and he went to the house of a businesswoman (Lydia), who was part of the movement in Philippi, "where they met with the brothers" (16:40). Recall Peter wanted the crowd to tell the stories he has just shared with "the brothers" (12:17). These narratives, although they contain numerous women, are male bonding stories.

5.5 The tale of three women

These stories that briefly mentioned the slave women are interlaced by a third woman, namely Lydia, "a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God" (16:14).⁷⁹ She is mentioned in the context of women who were not speaking, but listening to the male speaker(s): "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was Lydia" (16:13–14a).⁸⁰ There are familiar elements mentioned here: gate, prayer, and women. Unlike the so-characterized crazy slave women we have met, these women are presented as listening women.⁸¹ Lydia's heart was opened by the Lord to respond to Paul's message, and "when she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home" (16:14b–15).⁸² Lydia behaves herself well within the bounds of expected societal norms.⁸³

One may also notice allusions of territorial conquest in the narrative. Women have often played an important part in conquest strategies—both in the ancient and in the modern world—and often embody the ambiguous

relationships between colonizers and the colonized.⁸⁴ The arrival of the movement of “the Way” in a city under the sphere of Roman authorities such as Philippi has language and imagery associated with the founding of a cult in a new territory, with the corollaries of the defeat of a particular local religious expression and the expansion of the movement into new territories.⁸⁵ The conquest of Philippi is narratively assured through having an important businesswoman of the city believe and sit in silence, in the company of other women, and receive instructions. A woman diviner of the city is also defeated to make room for the emissaries to continue exchanging their religious views with others and to establish a new cult in this conquered space. It is true the text portrays certain opposition to the founders of this new movement coming from the Philippian owners of the slave woman and the Philippian authorities, but they are presented as mob-like agitators (a truly un-Roman manner of behaviour), as opposed to Paul’s masculine show of courage and virtue, even when portrayed as the recipient of unjust treatments—which are qualities highly valued in the Greco-Roman world. This particular opposition is also defeated when leading members of the missionaries (Paul and Silas) are portrayed as Roman citizens.⁸⁶

Lydia represents the good/ideal woman, the true Pauline line, corresponding with the emerging of an early orthodox Christian agenda that was slowly but surely moving from the margins to the center of the Roman Empire, while the mantic slave represents the bad and nagging woman whose pestering spirit needed to be cast out.⁸⁷ The narrative uses her, and then discards her. Luke’s characterization of the slave women is drawn from the accepted social norms that supported slavery. Luke seems to imply that one may agree with, or even accept, the historical place earliest Christ-believing women had amongst the first disciples and apostles; that there probably existed a woman slave (or slaves) with prophetic abilities around, but his ideological construction of them is that they were required to sit in silence to learn from the male authorities.⁸⁸ He may also imply through the story of the slave woman following Paul and the others in Acts 16 that there might have been a slave woman (or slaves) following messengers of the Way and proclaiming a message that is not altogether against what they preached, but this slave (or slaves like her) had a spirit of divination and needed to be silenced. In a document emerging in the early second century that was trying to describe the theological, political, and social dimensions of the earliest Christ-believing communities as unthreatening to the empire and the accepted social norms, Luke does not want to leave any room for his hearers/readers and patron(s) to consider the possibility that slave women may have been seen as having any prophetic voices or legitimacy in the origins of the movement.⁸⁹ Ultimately, “As a diasporic story, Acts charts the meager and finite agencies, strange bedfellows and, most poignantly, the incessant journeying from romance to disillusionment that comprise imperial and colonial life.”⁹⁰

Thus, the tale constructs itself: once there was a slave woman; her name was Rhoda. She was intriguing and persistent, but she could not control her joy when she heard Peter's voice at the outer gate of Mary's house, which followed the apostle's release from prison. She was perceived as crazy, but perhaps there was something far more profound to her. There was another woman; her name was Lydia. She was a businesswoman from the city of Thyatira and a worshiper of God; she was in company of other listening women. She believed and was baptized, behaving throughout as a proper lady. Finally, there was another woman; it is not important where she came from or what her name was; she was a slave and a diviner. That woman was loud and annoying. Although her message concerning Paul and his companions was correct, she had to be exorcized. Paul and Silas, after much trouble with the slave's owners for having cast out the spirit in that maid, were able to go back to Lydia's home, meet with the brothers and encourage them. They left afterwards. The message they proclaimed was believed by many Jews and by a number of important Greek women and many Greek men. Not the end, but to be continued.

5.6 Conclusion

Through the slave women in Acts, one may decipher some of Luke's social values and perspectives. Luke places the story about Lydia between the narratives referring to the slave women, as she is the best model of women for him. He also values the inclusion of prominent Greek women into the Christ-groups. Rhoda, although a slave woman and one who is, expectedly, not behaving properly, comes next in Luke's scale. However, she still has a lot to learn within the community of proper women. The exasperating nameless slave woman, who is outside the community, comes last. After her, Luke will no longer mention any other slaves. They are troublemakers. They disturb and disrupt; they are prone to escaping Luke's literary and editing control. This is why when one takes the time to highlight their specific characterization in the texts, Luke's political and theological hermeneutics becomes muddled. In other words, Luke's ideological goal of offering an "orderly account" (καθεξής), which silences any evidence of tensions, conflicts, and differences, disagreements, and controversies, becomes much more complex and unstable once we focus on how slave women are characterized in them. This does not bode well for his overall apologetic, theological, and social-political aims of presenting a beautiful and idealized history of earliest Christ-groups to his patron, "the most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3). By highlighting the slave women in the narratives, this analysis shows the prejudices and assumptions inherent in the text. Both of Luke's heroes (Peter and Paul), who provided him with the neat division of the book of Acts in two halves, show rough edges in their behaviours. Peter could silence others and treat "Mary and her house church as little more than a messenger service and halfway house."⁹¹

Paul, Luke's champion, is no longer simply this amazing speaker and/or articulate philosopher (17:16–31), miracle worker (14:8–10; 19:11–12; 20:9–12; 28:3–6; 28:7–9), formidable traveler (9–12; 13:1–14:28; 15:36–18:22–21:16–28:31), ideal Jew who frequents the synagogue (13:14; 14:1; 17:1, 10; 18:4, 19; 19:8), observes Jewish traditions (16:3; 18:18; 21:24), and the legally adept and self-controlled Roman citizen Luke wants to portray.⁹² Paul, also, could be annoyed and react to silence a persisting and disturbing slave woman's voice. By highlighting the women slaves in these texts, especially the violence factor associated with them, one may realize that Luke is not interested in them, or in what they may have added as prophetic voices to the burgeoning Christ-believing groups. He wants his readers/hearers and supporters to know that a Roman jailer and his family were baptized, that a business-woman received salvation, and that prominent Greek women and Greek men believed in the message. Regardless of how he might have started his historical and theologized report in the gospel of Luke, with the mention of the Magnificat song (Luke 1:46–55) and other idealized political visions—especially the Pentecost vision in Acts 2 *supporting* prophetic slave-women⁹³—and the possibility that God will turn the tables of injustice against the violence of empire, in the end, Luke's story is a politically ambiguous message preached by Jews, accepted by Jews, Romans, and prominent Greek women and men, and others; slave women may be in proximity in a liminal space, but they are still viewed as Other. As far as the selected texts around the slave women are concerned and the critical directions undertaken in this chapter indicate, Luke's apologetic historiography cannot be entirely set aside, in a genealogical sense, from the ensuing violence and silencing exercised against women, slaves, and those considered deviant Others in the development and accomplishments of early Christ-believing communities.

Ultimately, Luke's message, at least through the prism of the characterization of slave women considered therein, has in it elements or building blocks that may have helped in paving the road for a Roman/Christian empire that, in time, materialized.⁹⁴ The characterization of the slave women in Acts may be read as preparing the way to accept how female slave figures such as Felicitas and Blandina could be used and abused by Christian intellectuals in their myth-making processes of advancing particular theological conclusions, with no interest in the women slaves as violated bodies.⁹⁵

Notes

- 1 For Penner and Stichele, "Violence in the Lukan narrative is not just something that 'frames' or 'happens' in the narrative, and the gender relations reflected in the violence are not accidental or circumstantial. Rather, they are fundamental features of the story itself." "Gendering Violence," 202.
- 2 See Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence*. 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 8; Manfred Steger and Nancy Lind, eds., *Violence and Its Alternatives: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 33–53. On interpersonal

- violence in Roman social relations see Garrett G. Fagan, "Violence in Roman Social Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (ed. Michael Peachin; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 467–495. See also Joel Lenski, "Violence and the Roman Slave," in *The Topography of Ancient Greek and Roman Violence* (eds. Gareth G. Fagan and Werner Reiss; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 275–298. Slaves were routinely subjected to violence. The satirist Juvenal mentions the case of a woman who, because she was sexually frustrated, passed her anger on to her handmaid by tearing out her hair (Juv.6.219–24). The whip was always ready to accomplish its purpose on the back of a nearby slave. Juvenal also mentions the case of a slaveholder supervising preparations for a dinner party with his whip in hand to motivate his slaves (Juv.14.59–64).
- 3 By "mirror story" I mean reading one story as a reflection of another (previous) narrative, although the (re)created/(re)imagined story articulates its own particularities. I develop this concept later on in the chapter.
 - 4 The name "Luke" is used only as a convenient authorial reference, without assuming anything about the identity of an actual author in antiquity named Luke, who was known as "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14) and accompanied a first-century "Christian" apostle named Paul (Acts 28:30–31; 28:10–16; Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11). This tradition first appeared in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1; 3.14.1; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.2.2; Clement, *Paed.* 2.1.15; *Strom.* 5.12.82.
 - 5 Todd Penner and Caroline V. Stichele are right when they state, "Although some scholars have challenged the dominant paradigm provided by Acts, the stories of the subaltern other on the whole tend to remain submerged behind the dominant textual voice." See Todd Penner and Caroline V. Stichele, "Gendering Violence: Patterns of Power and Constructs of Masculinity in the Acts of the Apostles," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles* (eds., Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff; Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 193.
 - 6 See Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 76.
 - 7 On the social role of the nurse in the Roman world, see Keith R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family: Studies in Roman Social History* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 13–36. On the intricacies of the ancient economy of Greece and Rome see *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (eds., Walter Scheidel, Ian Morris and Richard P. Saller; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Peter Garnsey and Richard P. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture*. 2nd ed. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).
 - 8 Dennis R. MacDonald states, "Commentators seldom give Rhoda her due." See Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 142. I agree with Craig S. Keener that "Rhoda's role in Luke-Acts is, however, worthy of consideration as that of the only Christian slave named there, with whom some members of Luke's real audience may have identified. Her uniqueness may also reveal something about the early church, Luke's perspectives, or both." See Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. Vol. 2, 3: 1–14:28 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic Press, 2013), 1942. Keener's commentary is important, not so much for particular insights it sheds on Rhoda, but for its sheer thoroughness. The commentator has a number of pages on Rhoda—more than any other sources I have been able to consult—and he provides a good bibliographical source on ancient slavery for further studies (pages 1904–1948).
 - 9 That is, the story focusses on Peter as the central character; the authorial voice is that of a third-person narrator.

- 10 I want to specify I am not saying she was simply the doorkeeper. Opening the door seems to have been one of her functions.
- 11 What is stated here is at a narrative level.
- 12 In relation to how Rhoda is treated as hysterical by the others in the house of Mary, F. Scott Spencer states, "The poor girl is either too hysterical or too naïve to trust her judgment; being 'out of mind' renders her 'out of voice.'" F. Scott Spencer, "Out of mind, out of voice: Slave-girls and Prophetic daughters in Luke-Acts," *BibInt*. vii.2 (1999): 133–155 (here 144). Spencer's article greatly influenced my way of thinking about Rhoda's voice and presence in this narrative. Spencer adds elsewhere: "Apparently, the Jerusalem disciples are not yet ready to adopt the Pentecost agenda fully, particularly when it comes to heeding the voice of women and lower-class servants." See F. S. Spencer, *Journeying Through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 139.
- 13 See Dennis J. Horton, *Death and Resurrection: The Shape and Function of a Literary Motif in the Book of Acts* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 40–45.
- 14 See Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. Vol. 2, 1946–1947.
- 15 Mockery, alongside shame and violence, were linked in antiquity. See Donald G. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999). For studies on shame and honour in the ancient Roman setting, see in particular Carlin A. Barton, *The Fire in the Bones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). For important studies on a wider range of emotions in antiquity see also Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Robert Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 16 Margaret Aymer refers to the gathering of this group as a "traumatic gathering." For her, "In the face of political oppression, they cannot see the oppression they perpetuate. In the face of their own darkness, for one enslaved girl they perpetuate intersectional darkness." See M. Aymer, "Outrageous, Audacious, Courageous, Willfull: Reading the Enslaved Girl of Acts 12," in *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse* (eds., Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2016), 266.
- 17 On the guardian angel in early Jewish thought, see Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1998), 394–402. On the sheer comedy displayed in this pericope, see Kathy Chambers, "'Knock, Knock—Who's There?' Acts 12.6–17 as a Comedy of Errors," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, 89–97. See also Charles M. Stang, *Our Divine Double* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- 18 Ivoni Richter Reimer's liberation reading of Rhoda is altogether un-nuanced, in spite of containing few interesting and suggestive elements. She concludes, for example, that the fact that a slave woman talks back is an indication "that in this community in Mary's house the barriers between masters and slaves were broken down; here there are neither slaves nor masters/mistresses, but all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28)." See I. R. Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 242. One need remember that insolence or impudence were some of the stereotypical views held by slave owners regarding the ancient slaves. In this view, slaves were typically seen as rude; they would not accept the slaveholder's criticisms of their supposedly erratic behaviours without talking back as an attempt to explain their perceived silliness. Howard C. Kee follows the same direction of seeing inclusivity and harmony in this community based on the character Rhoda. He states, "The servant girl Rhoda, whose joyous recognition of Peter by his voice failed to convince the others

- until they finally responded to his persistent knocking, is an example of the inclusiveness of the new community: she is a woman and a servant.” See Howard C. Kee, *To Every Nation under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 154. It is interesting to note that those who disbelieved Rhoda are in fact the fools (even if they are portrayed as hyper-rational). However, the fact that Rhoda is called crazy and is to a certain extent portrayed as not having complete control over her emotions, is certainly in line with ancient stereotypes about both women and slaves.
- 19 Peter at this point, by being made to continue knocking at the door and being denied entrance back into this social space, at least momentarily, is experiencing a violence that Rhoda, as a slave, experiences every day.
 - 20 An Exodus symbolism is at play in Acts 12. For bibliography and further reflections see Christian Grappe, “Repas nocturnes, fêtes et identité dans les Actes,” *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse* 1 (2013): 121–134. At the Exodus, as reported in Exodus 12, an angel of death exercised violence against the first Egyptian males. The night of the Passover (τὸ πάσχα) is described as both dreadful and hopeful. The people of Israel needed to hurry up (μετὰ σπουδῆς, Ex. 12:11) and be ready to depart from the land of slavery. It is only a miracle that allowed Yahweh to bring his people out (ἐξάγω, Ex. 12:42 and Acts 12:17). Peter's liberation from prison may thus be understood “comme une sortie d'Égypte en raccourci.” See W. Rordorf, “Zum Ursprung des Osterfestes am Sonntag,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 18 (1962): 183, n. 65, translated and quoted in Christian Grappe (2013), 127.
 - 21 On some ancient authors' stereotypical impressions of women associated with earliest Christ-groups as hysterical, see Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
 - 22 In the case of Peter's request, the silence serves the greater good of delivering the good news. One may, however, reflect on how the silencing of “the crowd,” which is the actual direct object of the verb in 12:17, is best understood as part of a larger set of related actions that are ultimately good to advance the ideology of the biblical author. A contemporary novel is very evocative of the story of Peter standing in front of the crowd. The elements of silence, of death and life, and of dream present in both texts are gripping: “It was like an ancient Roman forum, as they all sat watching the play and turned in unison to look at me. They clapped and they hooted and they laughed, as the empty faced performers apparently gave their lines, which I couldn't hear but *they* heard it, and it caused the assembly to rock in their seats. I stood and watched this spectacle and suddenly all were silent as I walked up the steps. I walked to the center of the stage, looked at the empty faced chorus and then to the silent audience and spoke, ‘You are all wrong. I'm alive, but if I was dead, I wouldn't be here, I would be with God. For God knows me, not you. You only know a person for a moment, a short time, not that person's life ... not me ... not me ... not me ...’ I raised myself up on my elbows, coming out of my dream. ‘My God, what was that all about?’” See David Borland, *In a Moment's Time* (Victoria, BC: FriesenPress, 2012), 235.
 - 23 F. Scott Spencer, “Out of mind, out of voice,” 145.
 - 24 As Mitzi J. Smith rightly puts it, “Rhoda functions, not as the keen witness she is, but as the internal other who enhances or contributes to the epiphanic nature of Peter's appearance.” See Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other in the Acts of the Apostles: Charismatics, the Jews, and Women* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2012), 129.
 - 25 Most of the parallels highlighted here have been noticed before. The format of the table simply allows one to see them in a clearer way. For other works on the

- parallels between Jesus/Peter, and the women at the empty tomb/Rhoda in Acts 12 see, for example, Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 95; James M. Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 1995–1996; Susan Marie Praeder, “Jesus-Paul, Peter-Paul, and Jesus-Peter Parallelisms in Luke-Acts: A History of Reader Response,” in *SBL Seminar Papers* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1984), 23–39.
- 26 John J. Pilch notes that the response of the people in the community to Rhoda that it must be Peter’s angel indicates they believed that, “If she speaks truthfully, then she is likely perceiving a being from alternate reality, the realm of God: ‘his angel.’” See J. J. Pilch, *Visions and Healing in the Acts of the Apostles. How the Early Believers Experienced God* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004), 101.
- 27 See Marianne B. Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender*, 169.
- 28 Yves Saoût has done a number of illuminating literary analyses on the parallel between Jesus’ story and that of Peter. He puts the aim of the unity of the two narratives elegantly: “L’intention de Luc est évidente: montrer que Pierre, comme son Seigneur, est passé par les sombres régions de la mort et en a été délivré par Dieu.” See Yves Saoût, *Cette activité libératrice: Étude des Actes des apôtres: Les disciples de Jésus devant le pouvoir, l’avoir, le savoir* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Mame, 1984), 75.
- 29 Keith Hopkins draws attention to the fact that strict expectations regarding comportment were important in antiquity for assuring the maintenance and the clear divisions of social positioning: “The controlling elite was expected to be self-controlled.” See Hopkins, “Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery,” *Past and Present* 138 (1993): 10. On the virtue of restraining one’s emotions as an act valued by the Roman upper classes see also Robert Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome*, 84–103. Luke portrays the people gathered for prayer in the house as being able to control themselves, assuming thus the position of a respectable group, while having the crowd characterize the slave as crazy/unable to control herself. Jennifer A. Glancy also observes how important the demarcation between free bodies and enslaved bodies were in many early Christian texts: “In a wide variety of ways, early Christian writings participated in the broader cultural anxiety about the maintenance of decent boundaries between the statuses of slave and free.” Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 72.
- 30 Luke is particularly interested in heroic tales of great men of faith. The heroic males, especially Paul, who remains the principal hero until the end in the book of Acts, take center stage in Luke’s chronicling of the phenomenal rise of Christ-groups throughout the Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire in the first century C.E. (e.g., 2:41, 4:4; 11:21; 21:20).
- 31 This is the argument J. Albert Harrill advances in “The Dramatic Function of the Running Slave Rhoda (Acts 12.13–16): A Piece of Greco-Roman Comedy,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 150–157. For Harrill, Rhoda plays the role of a *servus currens* (the character of a running slave in Roman comedy). He states: “Far from being a realistic representation that indicates Luke’s use of some historical source, Rhoda is a running cliché of Greco-Roman situation comedy. Her function is to intensify the anticipation of the reader, to develop irony (inasmuch as the reader has more knowledge of the situation than do the characters), and to provide comic relief at a critical juncture in the narrative when all seems lost.” Harrill, “The Dramatic Function,” 151. My analysis of the character Rhoda does not hang so much on whether she was a historical person or not. In fact, the construction of many women characters may tell us more about male and/or master fantasies of women, both enslaved and free, than about historical women. I consider the narrative as a

textual unit and, although I lean towards the plausibility of the historical existence of Rhoda, I cannot deny that Luke might have well embellished the story to serve his own theological and political rhetoric. In other words, what I am suggesting is that behind the redaction of these enslaved women's stories lies a historical incident that may be reconstructed. However, I accept partly Harrill's conclusion that "Rather than advancing a theme of liberation that subverts slavery, Luke reinforces its institution and ideology [by making Rhoda a running cliché which encourages laughter at her as a moral inferior even when her news is true]." *Ibid.*, Harrill, 157. The bracketed part of the sentence is what I am not ready to accept. There is a lot more that could be taken from comedy, both the Attic comedy of Aristophanes, and the Roman comedy of Plautus and Menander, in terms of slaves being mouthy, emotionally unstable and generally silly. The Roman comedies have almost too many slaves of every conceivable type to mention. I think, however, that the richest source of commentary on slaves, in the Greek world at least, can be found in the context of the helots of Sparta. The helots were subject to ritual violence and degradation, in ways that probably influenced the milieu of Luke. See, for example, S. E. Alcock and N. Luraghi, eds., *Helots and their Masters in Laconia and Messenia: Histories, Ideologies, Structures* (Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2003); V. I. Anastasiadis and P. N. Doukellis, eds., *Esclavage Antique et Discriminations Socio-Culturelles* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005); A. Paradiso, "The Logic of Terror: Thucydides, Spartan Duplicity and an Improbable Massacre," in *Spartan Society* (ed. T. J. Figueira; Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2004), 179–198. For primary sources, Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* and Xenophon's *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* offer plenty of material on the helots, the ideology behind them, and the treatment they received at the hand of the Spartans. One of the most powerful statements on the treatment of slaves in general, in this case in a Roman Republican context, is found in Plutarch's *Life of Cato*, 21.1–4.

- 32 For a consideration of "haunting" as a valuable analytical category in New Testament/Early Christian studies, especially with respect to issues related to gender, ethnicity and race, see Denise K. Buell, "God's Own People: Specters of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Christian Studies," in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (eds., Elisabeth S. Fiorenza and Laura Nasrallah; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 159–190. See also the very sophisticated study of Maia Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).
- 33 Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 141–145.
- 34 There is a significant difference between Cassandra and Rhoda, however. One is free, the other a slave. However, although she is not enslaved in the *Iliad*, she is moving toward violent enslavement.
- 35 Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?*, 143.
- 36 I will come back to this question later on.
- 37 Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?*, 144.
- 38 That Homer and famed scenes from the *Iliad* were part of Luke's mental apparatus is not surprising in light of his culture and education, but one need be cautious about pushing the material to claim that this is what he is doing self-consciously. I engage in doing this kind of comparison for analytical purposes without being convinced that Luke was doing so clearly and intentionally as an ancient author.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 145.
- 40 See Seth L. Schein, "The Cassandra Scene in Aeschylus' Agamemnon," *Greece & Rome* 29.1 (1982): 11–16.

- 41 Carolyn Osiek notes Mary's allusion to herself as the δούλη of God in Luke 1:38, 48, after mentioning Rhoda as a slave among believers in Mary's house in Jerusalem. The only link Osiek seems to suggest between Mary's allusion and Rhoda's social condition as a slave is that the usage of δούλη in Mary's case is "of course metaphorical, but some of the connotations of female slavery are necessarily attached, especially her lack of honor, which only God can bestow on the honorless." Osiek, "Female Slaves, Porneia, and the Limits of Obedience," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 267. Although I notice the comparison between Mary's reference to herself as a δούλη of God and I propose a reimagining of Rhoda's narrative based on Mary's Magnificat, I do not want to lose sight of the slave status of Rhoda versus the social status of Mary.
- 42 In this imaginative theological reading, Luke's Peter is the one who assumes comedic qualities. After his rather humorous escape from prison, he enters into the house, seemingly oblivious of the presence of the slave, and without presenting any hint of understanding any larger theological significance she may have. On exploring this comedic side of the story, although without the nuance and the scholarly distance needed, see Kathy Chambers, "'Knock, Knock—Who's There?' Acts 12.6–17 as a Comedy of Errors," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, 89–97. One criticism I expect is that my reliance on the work of D. R. MacDonald is skeptical. One may argue that the association between Cassandra and Rhoda is far too tenuous to be of any value, and that Aphrodite is not immediately conceived of as connected to the rose. Indeed, MacDonald's work may give the general impression that he reads far more into the Classical texts than is really there, and certainly more than the New Testament writers seemed to notice in any meaningful way. Notwithstanding these cautions, I think the value of MacDonald's work, at least from the materials I have used here, is in its capacity to help a reader tease out fresh possibilities and to situate the Lukan narratives in a broader cultural and literary milieu.
- 43 Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?*, 144.
- 44 Mitzi J. Smith notices that "Peter's encounter with Rhoda in some respects parallels Paul's encounter with Lydia and the Pythian slave girl." Smith, *The Literary Construction*, 128.
- 45 There are three prison-escape stories in Acts (5:18–19; 12:5–10; 16:23–34), but my interest is only in the last two—although the one in chapter 16 can hardly qualify as an escape narrative—because of the link each of these stories has with a slave woman. See John B. Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany: Prison Escape in Acts of the Apostles*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 131 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).
- 46 To explore the "We" passages in Acts (16:11–17; 20:5–21:17; 27:1–28:16) see William S. Campbell, *The "We" Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character*. Studies in Biblical Literature, 14 (Atlanta, Georgia: SBL, 2007).
- 47 The "groups" function differently in the two stories.
- 48 One may argue Paul and his companions had no way of knowing her name since she was a stranger to them, unlike Rhoda who was with the crowd at Mary's place. A counter argument to this logic would be that the narrator displays important knowledge about this nameless slave, namely, she had a spirit of divination and that she earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling. That particular slave woman remains nameless because the author considers her as an annoying background noise that needed to be stopped, whose name was totally irrelevant.

- 49 I will qualify that statement later on in the chapter.
- 50 Literally, a spirit of Python. Πύθων, the serpent/dragon at Delphi, had possession of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi before being slain by Apollo in a contest.
- 51 The geographical space for the development of this narrative is Philippi (Acts 16:12). Philippi was founded by Philip II of Macedonia in around 358 B.C.E. It became a Roman city in around 168 B.C.E., and it was conceived as a Roman colony for retired army veterans in 31 B.C.E. when Augustus renamed Philippi as *Colonia Augustas Julia Philippensis* (Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 51.4.6). It was a hub of Roman culture; the colony was the beneficiary of a number of Roman rights and privileges (autonomous government, fiscal exemptions, and the Roman rule of law). See Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koester, eds., *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after his Death* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1988). By the time Paul and the missionaries with him would have entered the city in the early 50s, there were no Christ-groups in Philippi. The voice of the nameless slave echoes that of John the Baptist. The connections to the story between the nameless slave in Acts and John the Baptist are by ways of prophetic vocation and message. First, the prophetic oracle made by the priest Zachariah in the temple concerning his son to be born to his once barren and old wife Elizabeth: “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High (προφήτης ὑψίστου); for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation (τοῦ δοῦναι γνῶσιν σωτηρίας)” (Luke 1:76–77). Second, the echoes between Acts 16:17 and Luke 3:4. For John, it is the prophetic voice crying out in the desert (φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Luke 3:4). The connection between these two intriguing characters may mean that like John the Baptist she is duly mandated to announce to people the coming of a messenger (or messengers), who will lead the people to the way, or knowledge, of salvation. Her message is correct from Luke’s theological point of view. I am following F. Scott’s Spencer’s analysis at this point. See Spencer, “Out of mind, out of voice,” 147–148.
- 52 I use the word “ecstatic” not in the sense of mystical ecstasy, but to refer to sheer joy. It is true the text does not articulate this explicitly, but the verb ἔκραζεν (call out, cry out, shout, exclaim) used to describe her prophetic gifts seems to indicate she was euphoric in following and in announcing to others who these messengers were. One may also observe the similarity between her announcement and that of Matthew 21:9 concerning the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem: “The crowds that went before him and those that followed were shouting (ἔκραζον) ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’”
- 53 This possibility is raised because of the timeframe in the narrative.
- 54 Jonathan Walters, “Invading the Roman body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought,” in *Roman Sexualities* (ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 39. The proximity of the slave woman allowed Luke’s characterization of her as Other.
- 55 The word ὑψιστος is found eight times elsewhere in the New Testament corpus (Mark 5:7; Luke 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; Heb. 7:1), and numerous times in the Septuagint. The term, expectedly in its biblical use, refers to the god of the Jews, which they claimed as the supreme one occupying the place of the Most High God. The oracle of the slave woman identified the Jewish crowd (Paul and the others) as “slaves of the High God” in the biblical sense of ὑψιστος. For more discussions and bibliographical sources on this lexical entry, see Ivoni R. Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 161–167. Dennis R. MacDonald also shows another Greek classical text (a tragedy) that plays the role of antext for Luke as he deployed the narrative of Acts 16:16–40. The text is Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*. It

- opens up with the Pythian prophetess praying to the gods for inspiration; the text ends with invocations that comprise a number of linguistic elements similar to what is found in the Lukan text. For example, ὑψίστος is mentioned and, as expected in this context, it is used in relation to Zeus. Polemically, Luke may have effectively used elements of this story in order to make the mantic prophetess confess, not Zeus as the all-powerful Most High God, but the one proclaimed by Paul and those with him. See MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil: Imitation of Classical Greek Literature* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 44–47. For the usages of ὑψίστος in Asia Minor and elsewhere, without the Jewish influence and referring to any deity in the Graeco-Roman pantheon, see Paul R. Trebilco, “Paul and Silas—‘Servants of the Most High God’ (Acts 16.16–18),” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 11 (1989): 51–73; and Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 127–144. See also Nicole Belayche, “De la polisémie des épicleses: Ὑψίστος dans le monde gréco-romain,” in *Nommer les dieux. Théonymes, épithètes, épicleses dans l’Antiquité* (eds., N. Belayche et al.; Paris/Rennes, Brepols: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), 427–442.
- 56 Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 156–160.
 - 57 Bruce W. Longenecker states something similar: “The Lukan author frequently tries to establish that the good news of the Jesus-movement is not a threat to those in positions of civic responsibility, while at the same time registering ingredients of that news that run against the grain of Roman society and honor.” See Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 270, note 28.
 - 58 Κράτιστε is used on three occasions as a term of address for a Roman governor in Acts (23:26; 24:3; 26:25).
 - 59 See Olivia F. Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 80; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 16.162. See also Mary E. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study of Political Relations*. 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 143. Some potential converts might have asked, justifiably: What is exactly the composition of various Christ-groups? How are Christ-believing groups similar to and different from other associative communities in the Greek and Roman world? Are there prominent members of society who constitute important parts within the movement and who assume key leadership roles? Luke could not avoid these anxieties, and the Luke-Acts narrative gives clues regarding how he tried to negotiate these concerns and how he attempted to give an orderly sequence (καθεξῆς, Luke 1:3) and reasonable case for joining (or supporting) the movement of the Way.
 - 60 See for example Steve Walton, “The State They Were in: Luke’s View of the Roman Empire,” in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (ed. Peter Oakes; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 1–41; Virginia Burrus, “The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles,” in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (eds., Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 133–155.
 - 61 *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World Series (eds., Sarah I. Johnston and Peter T. Struck; Leiden/Boston, 2005), 10–11.
 - 62 Kim Beerden, *Worlds Full of Signs: Ancient Greek Divination in Context*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World Series (Leiden/Boston, 2013), 20.
 - 63 See J. Dillery, “Chresmologues and Mantels, Independent Diviners and the problem of authority,” in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, 167–231, here 171.
 - 64 Sarah I. Johnston states, “Diviners are frequently somewhat mobile members of society insofar as they are understood by nature to belong at its margins and yet

- may be called on to serve those firmly entrenched at its center.” *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, 19.
- 65 Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods: Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Roman World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999). As John Scheid states, “The Romans, like the Greeks, accepted the fundamental principle that the gods lived in the worlds alongside men and strove with them, in a civic context, to bring about the common good.” J. Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (Originally published in French as *La religion des Romains*, Paris, 1998; trans. Janet Lloyd; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 147.
 - 66 One of the ideas of the etic definition is to make explicit that it was not necessarily so, but that the emic actors thought it was.
 - 67 I will consider these verses later on.
 - 68 See Katy E. Valentine, “Reading the Slave Girl of Acts 16:16–18 in light of Enslavement and Disability,” *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 26 (2018): 352–368.
 - 69 Sandra R. Joshel states, “As property, the slave, even if his work is considered an art, has no physical integrity and is subject to his owner’s physical violence.” Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20.
 - 70 Slave ownership was above all, as stated by Keith Bradley, “an expression of power,” because of the quasi-total control and level of domination the owners had over the lives of their human properties. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 24. However, as rightly observed by Sandra R. Joshel, “Slaveholders’ complaints about quick-tempered, silly, obstinate, sluggish slaves bespeak slaves’ refusal to serve with complete subservience.” Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, 193. Bradley also gives various examples of slaves’ various forms of resistance (for example, running away, committing suicide, committing violent acts on slaveholders, cheating, lying, working at a slow pace, sabotaging property). See *Slavery and Society at Rome*, especially chapter 6, “Resisting Slavery.”
 - 71 See Gail O’Day, “Acts,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary* (eds., Carol E. Newson and Sharon H. Ringe; London/Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 310–311; and Clarice Martin, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *Searching the Scriptures, vol. 2: A Feminist Commentary* (ed. E. S. Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 784–785.
 - 72 It is true the damage has been done to her spirit and not to her body, but these components go hand in hand. Without the ability to read signs and exercise her mantic abilities, she could even be forced to use her body as a prostitute in order to survive. This way, her owners would still receive the fees charged for her sexual labors in lieu of profiting from her previous prophetic works. Marianne B. Kartzow makes a similar point in *Destabilizing the Margins: An Intersectional Approach to Early Christian Memory* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 131. On working as a prostitute for the profit of the slave owners, see S. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, 150. Kyle Harper has noted that in some cases slavery and prostitution were synonymous. See Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*, 308–309.
 - 73 I consider Lydia’s role in Acts later on in the chapter.
 - 74 The historicity of Paul having the status of *civis romanus* is arguable. I am still unconvinced by the positions of a number of scholars who accept, although usually not without some degree of hesitation, that Paul was in fact a citizen of Rome. See Brian M. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody* (The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 83–90; Peter van Minnen, “Paul the

Roman Citizen,” *JSNT* 56 (1994): 43–52; Udo Schnelle, *Paulus: Leben und Denken* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 44–47. I side with the few scholars who think Paul’s status as a Roman citizen was fictional. See Wolfgang Stegemann, “War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?,” *ZNW* 78 (1987): 200–229; John C. Lentz Jr., *Luke’s Portrait of Paul* (SNTSMS 77; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 26; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 554–556. Paul, who worked as a poor itinerant artisan, never mentioned such high status in his letters, even to the effect of diminishing its importance, as he did in relation to his Jewish pedigrees in Philippians 3:5. Luke had apologetic and sociopolitical reasons to make such a literary creation. If one adopts a late date for the composition of Acts (about 40 to 50 years after the First Revolt, around 100–150), when Christ-groups were defining themselves not as apocalyptic and fringe societal/religious groups in the Roman world composed of mostly slaves, women and children, but as a respectable and politically innocuous developing movement consisting of prominent members of society alongside others whose behaviours are compatible with expected and normal societal values of the empire, then it makes perfect sense that Luke would want to present Paul as a Roman citizen. On situating Acts within the second-century world and contexts of Christians, Romans, Greeks and Jews, see Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament, vol. 2: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 310; Richard Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 2006); Rubén R. Dupertuis and Todd Penner, eds., *Engaging Early Christian History: Reading Acts in the Second Century* (London: Acumen, 2013). Luke’s rhetorical and apologetic strategies may help us understand why he would place Paul within the category of a Roman citizen. He does not want anyone to consider his hero as a slave (that is, one considered mad, out of control, without honour, and susceptible to be publicly shamed without any qualm or recourse). Luke wants to state that even if Paul may have accepted being beaten and shamed as a slave, he had theological aims for doing so; he did not want his social status to be an impediment to his endeavours in preaching the good news to all. For more on the construction of Paul in Luke see Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 149–156. For considering Luke-Acts as apologetic history see Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 64 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1992).

- 75 One should be cautious in evaluating the role of women in Luke-Acts and consider the socio-political contexts that would have made Luke present women mainly in the functions of nurturers and providers of financial assistance, without much leadership authorities in the variegated communities. See in particular Ann Graham Brock, “Luke the Politician: Promoting the Gospel by polishing Christianity’s rough edges,” in *Early Christian Voices In Texts, Traditions, and Symbols* (eds., David H. Warren, Ann G. Brock and David W. Pao; Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2003), 82–97. On Luke’s ambivalent image of women see also Turid K. Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London/New York: T&T Clark International, 1990).
- 76 I am alluding to the description of ancient slave provided by Norbert Brockmeyer when he states, “Diese Einteilung und Definition Zeigt, daß Sklaven als reine Produktionsinstrumente angesehen wurden, die sich nur durch ihre Stimme vom Vieh unterschieden. Wenn ein Sklave, wie hier gezeigt, als res galt, bedingte das nicht nur Recht-, sondern auch Pflichtenlosigkeit: *In personam servilem nulla cadit obligatio* (Dig. 50, 17, 22 pr.).” See Brockmeyer, *Antike Sklaverei*. Erträge der Forschung, Bd. 116 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 9.

- 77 Self-inflicted death in the Roman world could be interpreted either as an individual's wish to make his/her end stand as a commentary on the regime, or an act done in order to unveil the violence of the power in place. See Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 122–123.
- 78 Although there was a plot by some Jews to kill Paul (23:13–22), it could not be finalized. The various troubles that came up for Paul are not so much the result of the machinations of the Roman Empire, which shows benevolence towards him—withstanding the overarching framework of the violent imperial system—but of various local groups of people, mostly composed of Jews, who are treated as outsiders and depicted as the usual fomenters of violence (e.g., 13:44–50; 14:1–6, 19; 17:5–13; 18:12–17; 21:17–36; 22:22; 23:10, 20–21). Another example of the cessation of killings in Acts is found in Acts 27:42. The Roman soldiers responsible for guarding the prisoners on the ship sailing for Rome planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming free as a result of a shipwreck. That plan did not materialize either. The death of Paul is not narrated, but Paul's ambition of extending the mission up to the capital of the empire is realized (19:21). Rome, ultimately, supersedes Jerusalem in Luke's theological and political vision. Acts ends with Paul as a Roman prisoner under house arrest, proclaiming the message "to all who came to him" (28:30–31).
- 79 Robert M. Price suggests that it is not Paul who is annoyed by the slave woman but Luke, "who in his patriarchalist ecclesiastical context feels annoyance at the prospect of a woman preaching or prophesying." His guess is that "the text before has depicted the Pythoness as a Philippian convert having joined Paul in his evangelistic activity there—and that her name was Lydia." See Price, *The Widow Traditions in Luke-Acts: A Feminist-Critical Scrutiny*. SBL Dissertations Series 155 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 228. Price's dubious proposal that Luke split one character into two (Lydia=Rhoda) requires too much textual and interpretive gymnastics to be, at least to me, considered as a valid argument. My treatment of Lydia is admittedly underdeveloped simply because she is not the focus of my analysis. I mention her to show how she is placed between the narratives of the slave women to play Luke's narrative function of what he values as the model of a good woman. In other words, the slave women function in the narrative as the "bad women" in contrast to Lydia's status as a "good woman." See Jeffrey L. Staley, "Changing Woman: Postcolonial Reflections on Acts 16.6–40," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999): 113–135, here 126–128. Staley argues that the juxtapositioning of Lydia and the slave woman allows one to understand their function as border-crossing women in the narrative—where the first inhabitants of a defined Roman territory Paul and the other missionaries met—placed at this particular juncture to legitimize the ideological and territorial conquests of the ideological colonizers.
- 80 Spencer remarks: "In the larger narrative of Acts 12:1–9, the public city-domain where Herod violently asserts his power is bounded by two gates: (1) the 'iron gate' (*pylē*) to the prison through which Herod intended to 'bring out' Peter for execution (12:4, 10) and (2) the 'outer gate' (*pylōn*) to Mary's home through which Peter gains ultimate refuge from Herod's plot." The references to "gate" continue when in 16:13 we read: "On the Sabbath we went outside the 'city gate' (*pylē*) to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer." F. Scott Spencer, "Out of mind, out of voice," 143. The lexeme "gate" seems to play the role of a special spatial marker that helps in moving the narratives from point A to point B. Also, although the present chapter is about slaves in Acts and not women in Acts, it is important to mention Lydia in the analysis because of where she is situated in the narrative, and because of the role model she plays for Luke in comparison to the slave women.

- 81 On Luke's placing women in positions of addressees and good listeners see Turid K. Seim, *The Double Message*, 162–163. On Luke's domestic characterization of women see Mary R. D'Angelo, "The ANHP Question in Luke-Acts: Imperial Masculinity and the Deployment of Women in the Early Second Century," in *A Feminist Companion to Luke* (eds., Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 44–69.
- 82 See Richard Ascough, *Lydia: Paul's Cosmopolitan Hostess* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2009). Ascough notes "Luke's proclivity for presenting men and women of substance as founding members of Jesus groups." *Ibid.*, 5.
- 83 See Michael White, "Visualizing the 'Real' World of Acts 16: Toward Construction of a Social Index," in *The Social World of the First Christians* (eds., L. Michel White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 234–261. White also cautions about taking Luke's narrative of how an important businesswoman in Philippi became part of the movement as accurately reflecting an actual and historical conversion of a woman named Lydia that happened in first-century Philippi. *Ibid.*, here 259. Margaret Y. MacDonald follows this line of argument, which I agree with, and she advises that it "is probably best not to look for direct correlation between the story of Lydia and the real circumstances of Paul's day. Rather, for the author of Acts Lydia represents the ideal woman convert, a facilitator of Christian growth to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) whose own house serves as a base for the movement (16:15, 40)." See Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity," in *Early Christian Families in Context*, 177.
- 84 See among others Geraldine Moane, *Gender and Colonialism: A Psychological Analysis of Oppression and Liberation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966); M. Etienne and E. Leacock, eds., *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Tamara L. Hunt and Micheline R. Lessard, eds., *Women and the Colonial Gaze* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).
- 85 There are correspondences and broad thematic parallels between some of Acts' narrative patterns with regard to the founding of the new movement in Philippi and basic patterns, topos, or type-scenes present in classical tales such as Euripides' *Bacchae*. For example, in the *Bacchae*, Lydia is the birth place of Dionysus (*Bacchae* 464), the Greek god that drives the women of Thebes mad with the view to worship him and to exercise prophetic abilities (*Bacchae* 32–38, 217–220, 298–305). In Acts 16, Lydia is the name of a woman from Thyatira, a city within the region of Lydia. Paul in Acts 16 plays the role of the one who drives the women not to madness but to sanity; however, he casts out the spirit of divination from the slave woman because he is annoyed by the prophetic spirit in her. For direct dependence of Luke on this Greek drama, see Dennis R. MacDonald, "Lydia and Her Sisters as Lukan Fictions," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, 105–110. See also Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 409–411; Lilian Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Seen by First-Century Philippian Women* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988), 169–171; Shelly Matthews, "Elite Women, Public Religion, and Christian Propaganda in Acts 16," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, 113–117; Courtney J. P. Friesen, *Reading Dionysus: Euripides' Bacchae and the Cultural Contestations of Greeks, Jews, Romans, and Christians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 207–235.
- 86 Penner and Stichele place the conquest of the slave woman and the defeat of the opposing group in a clear way: "The slave girl represents the battleground between Paul and her male owners. Her fate is entirely beside the point; there is no real sense of 'healing' or liberation in this narrative. At stake rather, is the demonstration of

- power, and, even more to the point, Paul's superiority over other males (and his God over theirs). Interpretations that focus on the 'demonic' element again miss the point—this is a battle between men for control over her spirit, which is a source of profit for her owners. For Paul, however, she is an annoyance and a nuisance." Todd Penner and Caroline V. Stichele, "Gendering Violence: Patterns of Power and Constructs of Masculinity in the Acts of the Apostles," 206.
- 87 See Marianne B. Kartzow, "The Complexity of Pairing: Reading Acts 16 with Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*," in *Engaging Early Christian History*, 131. Kartzow, elsewhere, does excellent work in substituting the name of Luke for Aristotle in a profound statement made by Elizabeth V. Spelman in her book, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 38. The quote reads thus: "An account of *Luke's* view about women that doesn't inquire seriously into what he says about slave women not only announces that the position of slave women is theoretically insignificant, it also gives a radically incomplete picture of what he says about women who are not slaves." See Kartzow, *Destabilizing The Margins*, 42. What is important to mention here is that we see not only "Luke's view on women," but also how he uses intersections of gender and class to construct hierarchy and ideals to satisfy certain Greco-Roman (male) gaze.
 - 88 For the literary function of pairing women to men with the intent of instruction and edification see Constance F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism* (ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 139–146.
 - 89 See Mary R. D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View," *JBL* 109.3 (1990): 441–461; idem, "(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke-Acts," in *Women and Christian Origins* (eds., Ross S. Kraemer and Mary R. D'Angelo; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 171–194.
 - 90 Maia Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 107.
 - 91 F. Scott Spencer, "Out of mind, out of voice," 145. For a thorough treatment of silences in Luke see Michal Beth Dinkler, *Silent Statements: Narrative Representations of Speech and Silence in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).
 - 92 John C. Lentz Jr., *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (SNTSMS 77; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23–61.
 - 93 Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28–32) being rearticulated in Peter's speech in Acts 2:17–21 that the Spirit will fall upon even male and female slaves (καὶ γε ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας μου).
 - 94 I admit that Luke's message in Acts is much more complex and ambivalent vis-à-vis empire than perhaps presented here. Luke may be presented as one who displays a variety of strategies for negotiating the empire; there are certainly potentials for anti-imperial reading in the Luke-Acts corpus. See C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); *Luke-Acts and Empire: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Brawley* (eds., David Rhoads, David Esterline and Jae W. Lee; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); and an excellent article on the *status quaestionis* by Michael Kochenash, "Taking the Bad with the Good: Reconciling Images of Rome in Luke-Acts," *Religious Studies Review* 41.2 (2015): 43–51.
 - 95 See the next chapter on Felicitas and Blandina.

SLAVES IN EARLY CHRISTIAN MARTYR NARRATIVES

6.1 The cases of Felicitas and Blandina

The aim of this chapter is to argue that the slaves in the early Christian martyr narratives are used to advance particular theological conclusions. The authors of these narratives, in similar fashion to other texts, have no interest in the slaves as characters; they are present only as rhetorical devices. The focus of the chapter is on two particular female slave figures, namely Felicitas and Blandina. The focus is on them because the story of Felicitas in the martyrdom account of Perpetua and Felicitas and the story of Blandina in the account of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne are the only two early Christian narratives that feature female slaves.¹ I will first analyze the portrayal of Felicitas in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* in order to explore how she has been re-signified, reinterpreted, and reimagined in the *Acta*. At the end of the chapter, an analysis of how Blandina is used and abused in the myth-making process of early Christian discourse will be undertaken.

The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is an early third-century composition (202–203 C.E.) of North African origin (Carthage).² The work was originally written in Latin and subsequently translated into Greek.³ Besides the preface (1–2) and a brief epilogue (16–21) by an anonymous editor,⁴ the account of the martyrdom is narrated by Perpetua.⁵ There is also the insertion of Saturus' dream after Perpetua's concluding words following her final vision in 11–13. Perpetua's writing about her experiences while in prison waiting to be executed in the Carthage amphitheater is the earliest surviving first-person narrative written by a female and the only surviving *journal intime* we possess from antiquity.⁶ Although the narrative is presented as the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, the story is conceived from the perspective of the noblewoman, who takes center stage.⁷ The aim of the following analysis is to highlight the figure of the other woman in the text, the slave Felicitas. I will highlight the case of Felicitas in order to draw attention to issues of gender and class in the narrative.⁸

In the *Passion*, one encounters several slaves. The beginning of the text relates the names of “the young catechumens Revocatus and Felicity, his

fellow slave (*conserva eius*/σύνδουλοι),⁹ and of Saturninus and Secundulus” (2.1).¹⁰ They were all arrested on the charges of being members of a group of Christ-followers. Alongside these slaves who were apprehended was also a young woman of certain social means named Perpetua. She is introduced thus: “Among them was also Vibia Perpetua, who was well born, well educated, honorably married, and who had a father, a mother, and two brothers, one of them also a catechumen, and an infant son at her breast. She herself was about twenty-two years old” (2.2).

Thus far, two women are introduced: Felicitas and Perpetua. Both are important in the development of the narrative. The name of the slave is related and much information is given concerning the elite woman. The narrator deemed it important to portray Perpetua in her full humanity. Her complete name is given, and it is specified that she was not born as a slave, or poor, but was “respectably born” (*honeste nata*/εὐγενῶς).¹¹ She is well educated and she belongs to a family composed of a father, a mother, and two brothers. One of her brothers also belongs to the group of Christ-followers. Perpetua is a married woman, but no information is given about her husband;¹² all that is known is that she is about 22 years old and has an infant. The following questions are worth pondering: How can one explain that “within the first-person narrative that the larger martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas contains, Vibia Perpetua has absolutely nothing to say about Felicitas, her co-martyr, co-mother, and co-namesake of the larger martyrdom narrative that binds the women together in historical memory”?¹³ What is at stake? What can we learn? These are some of the questions I will be pursuing in the remainder of this analysis of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.

Highlighting the slaves in this narrative means reading what is missing in the presentation of Felicitas. We do not know Felicitas’ full name and we are not informed whether she was born a slave, or whether she was picked up as one little body among other little bodies exposed on a dung heap somewhere in the city.¹⁴ The narrator does not inform us about Felicitas’ age or whether she received an education either. Her marital status does not seem relevant to the narrator because, as a slave, it could have been very difficult for her to be legally married.¹⁵ Even if she were in a serious relationship with someone, her unprotected body would still be open to satisfy the sexual appetites of her slaveholder(s).¹⁶ Felicitas is presented as one lacking familial relations.¹⁷ She has no relatives; she is a sheer commodity available to be bought and sold, whose “role is to serve as a backdrop for Perpetua’s transformations.”¹⁸ She could have been with different households already at this point in her life. If she had any brothers and sisters, she could have been far away from them.¹⁹ None of these considerations seems to matter to the narrator or to the audience of this Martyr Act.

The two women are the heroines of the tale, but the presentation and the agency of one is superior to the other. The narrator seems to want to convey the message that sharing particular life circumstances with someone does not

equate to overcoming social differences and boundaries. The two women may be in prison together awaiting execution for a common religious belief and practice, but socially, the narrator is pointing out from the outset of the narrative, they are different. The whole act will play out to present these two women as clearly different socially, although similar in how they embraced martyrdom for the sake of Christ. The text portrays Perpetua as an authoritative *domina* whose social status established her as a leader among the imprisoned Christians. As stated by Jennifer A. Glancy, “Perpetua, not Felicitas, had the strength and confidence to address the catechumens as they faced death. Far from dissolving the distinctions between freeborn woman and slave, the martyrdom account reinforces the distinctions of *habitus* dividing the two brave women.”²⁰

Later on, the reader is given an important piece of information about Felicitas. She was in the eighth month of a pregnancy when she was arrested. As the day of her execution was approaching, “she was very anxious (*in magno erat luctu*)²¹ that it might be put off because of her condition (since it is illegal for pregnant women to be made part of a punitive spectacle)” (15.2). Why would Felicitas be so eager to die for Christ? Besides the religious explanation that she wanted to partake in the sufferings of Christ, could it be that she desperately wanted to embrace death because her life’s circumstances as a slave were miserable and death-like?²² She is presented as one without attachment, family, or relationships.²³ Could the infant she was carrying be the result of rape? This is possible since she could have been sexually assaulted by her own master, who could have been the father of this child she was carrying. The text gives the impression that Felicitas did not want to continue living for even one more month until her term of labor was due. She wanted to die as soon as possible, likely because of her servile condition, and not at a later time. The theological rationale for her readiness to die with the other martyrs is that she did not want to be executed with others who were not Christ-followers. Thus, “she would pour out her holy and innocent blood at a later time with other, real criminals” (15.2). Since her fellow companions in chains “became sad at the prospect of abandoning so good an ally to be (so to speak) a solitary fellow traveller along the same road of hope” (15.3) and because of her eagerness to become a martyr for Christ, they prayed to God so that Felicitas might be able to join them in this particular act of witness to God by giving birth to her baby prematurely.

Three days prior to the set time of execution, Felicitas went into labor. The narrator indicates that it was rather painful for Felicitas to deliver her eight-month-old infant. As she was groaning in childbirth, the jailer mocked her: “If this is how you act now, what will you do when you are thrown to the beasts that you didn’t care about when you decided not to sacrifice” (15.5). The only time in the whole narrative when Felicitas speaks is to utter a few words to the jailer. She replied, “Now I am the one suffering what I suffer, but then another inside me will suffer for me (*illic autem alius erit in me qui patietur*

pro me/ἐκεῖ δὲ ἄλλος ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ἐμοὶ πάσχων ἐμου ἔσται ἐν ἐμοὶ ἵνα πάθῃ), since I will also be suffering for him” (15.6). Felicitas’ daughter was given to a Christian woman who brought her up as her daughter. This seems to imply that either Felicitas did not have relatives, that as a slave her relatives could not legally have custody of her daughter, or that her owner(s) did not care about her or the baby she was carrying.²⁴ Instead of exposing this little body somewhere on a dung heap to be picked up by some passerby, Felicitas had someone from the Christian community take her daughter to raise her as their own child.²⁵ Felicitas seems to be utterly consumed with giving herself up as a sacrifice for Christ, never expressing concern for her child or agony about giving her up.²⁶ There is no mention of the father; it is too complicated to understand completely.

Perpetua writes a “diary” that focuses on herself as a courageous woman, on her family (in particular her father and also her brothers—her mother being a mere shadowy figure only mentioned once, 3.7)—and on her baby.²⁷ Male members who are fellow martyrs and the deacons Pomponius and Tertius occupy some space in her text as well. As a whole, other female figures are almost entirely excluded in her record.²⁸ Felicitas, the slave and only other woman in the group, is omitted. Regarding the treatment Felicitas receives in the text, John W. Marshall’s analysis is worth quoting at length:

Perhaps Perpetua’s action of ignoring Felicitas in her own account of identity formation is no surprise when the dynamics of colonial rule, including the social hierarchy of the settler/colony and its attendant unfree labour, are placed at the center of analysis. The narrative focuses on the status she gains in her relation to male authority figures, her father and brother, and in the display of her “special patronal relationship with her Lord” attested in the civic space. Similar dynamics show up in the transgendering vision in which Perpetua changes into a male fighter and enters into combat with a “certain Egyptian, horrible in appearance,” who turns out to be the Devil and the Empire.²⁹

It is true that the account is Perpetua’s, but the concerns of mother Felicitas over her child are not even implied. We hear the voice of mother Perpetua, but not of mother Felicitas. We read about Perpetua’s family and her concerns for the fate of her own infant, but the narrative does not relate any of the slave’s anxieties for her own daughter. The overall focus on Perpetua is understandable. Among other things, it is the fact that a young woman from a reputable Carthaginian family (that must be known in town) converts to a religious subgroup and dies a martyr death that makes her story so scandalous. The more information included about her life, concerns, and so on, the more probable it is that her story will attract the attention of listeners and readers, and prevent the whole text from fading into oblivion.

When the two women are brought up into the open arena to be gored by a fierce cow, their femininity is highlighted in the description given of them: “The people were aghast as they looked upon them, the one a beautiful girl, the other a woman fresh from giving birth and with dripping breasts” (20.2). In this whole scene, one may clearly see that the two women are presented differently. One is presented as a delicate, young, and beautiful girl (*puellam delicatam*/τροφεράν κόρην), who is still concerned with her appearance and how she is being perceived by others. The other woman is a leaking body.³⁰ Perpetua was first to be thrown by the mad cow, falling on her back (*in lumbos*). When she sits up, her concern is on her modesty or *pudor*, rather than her sufferings: “she rearranged the tunic that had been torn away from her body to cover her hips, thinking more of her modesty than of her pain (*pudoris potius memor quam doloris*)” (20.3–4).³¹ Perpetua tries to keep “her-self symbolically impenetrable to the spectators’ gaze by covering her briefly exposed thigh.”³² And in the midst of her confusion she sees Felicitas wounded. She approaches and gives Felicitas her hand, lifting her up, so the two can stand together (20.6).

There is no presentation about how the slave Felicitas felt regarding her own appearance. In spite of the fact that she is described as one with milk still dripping out of her breasts (*stillantibus mammis*/μασθοῖς στάζουσιν γάλα) (20.2), we are not informed of her own perception of her physicality. She is not presented as one with any concern for the public display of her own nudity, or her hair being messy. She is a crushed woman whose exposed body leaks both milk and blood. She is a slave woman crushed in the text. Felicitas is talked about and seen by Perpetua in the arena, but never speaks again. It is interesting that the text wants to present the solidarity between the two women in an undeniable way. “For a brief moment, they seem to be standing side by side as equals, both dressed in the same fashion, sharing their suffering in the arena (20.6).”³³ Nevertheless, this presentation does not succeed in bridging the gap between the two women. It is Perpetua who has the agency; it is she who, after having restored her appearance, sees the bloodied Felicitas in the arena and approaches her. The redactor is depicting Perpetua’s superiority through this gesture. Perpetua is on her feet and in control of her body enough to extend help to—and literally pull up—Felicitas from the ground. If Perpetua “has fashioned an understanding of herself as powerful, empowered by her sufferings,”³⁴ Felicitas does not display any such characteristics. In the arena, she is a public spectacle; the object of the crowd’s gaze and the pitiful sight of her co-martyr.³⁵ The noblewoman is the one giving the hand to the slave and lifting her up. While it is true they stood together, one can observe clearly that even in this particular circumstance, one is of delicate frame, while the other is a crushed slave with milk still dripping at her breasts. They stood together for Christ, but the text makes it also clear that they are forever separate in and by their social classes (power dynamics) and expected demeanor and behaviors (*habitus*/discursive practices). Notice how the editor

is concerned about preserving Perpetua's elite status until the end of her life: "And when they had been led to the gate and forced to don costumes ... Perpetua, a noblewoman to the end, adamantly refused" (18.4). One may also advance that Felicitas was silenced because the figure of Perpetua increased the probability that the text would be read by future generations—not only because Perpetua was from a respected family, but mainly due to the unusualness of all the actions and circumstances that are described in the text.

The last mention of Felicitas is that she was standing up with Perpetua. The narrator then goes to complete the image of the blessed Perpetua, with no words regarding Felicitas. What happened next to Felicitas? Did she succumb to her wounds? Did she, like Perpetua, who did not even realize she was severely bruised by the cow, ask to be executed by the sword as well? The text leaves the reader who is interested in the fate of Felicitas frustrated and disappointed. Why is it that the last image of Felicitas is of her standing up with another woman deemed worthy to have a story that has a beginning and a heroic end—Perpetua was able to help the fumbling hand of the gladiator to perform his task by guiding the sword to her throat (21.9)—while the woman slave story is without an introduction and clear conclusion? The narrative concerning the slave Felicitas is left in want of resolution. It is as if the narrator does not know what to do with her. Like the other catechumens, Felicitas was probably killed by the sword,³⁶ but her end is not as heroic or worthy of description as the end of the *domina* Perpetua.

6.2 Haunted by Felicitas

To speak in terms of haunting is to attend to a ghostly presence in order to create a space to engage the gaps, silences, and muted presences. Haunting as a project of displacement is to allow one to explore how taking a dead/ghost figure such as Felicitas seriously can disrupt, complicate, critique, and question the dynamics of power present in the narrative. This haunting project disturbs the narrative that places one figure as the hero or heroine, while ignoring the isolation and powerlessness of other voices. Such a project is a liberating one. It is an invitation to look for marginalized or silenced voices in texts and in the interpretation of texts.³⁷ The imagery of haunting may allow us to think about Felicitas not only, or simply, as a dead slave seeking death, but also to let her deadness provoke us to problematize her death in the text and outside of it. This project is to show how her slave's status may help us to address the question of why she is thus presented in the text.³⁸ In other words, "why does Felicitas vanish when Perpetua writes?"³⁹

Perpetua's concerns are certainly "religious," but they are also, at the same time, social and political. Better yet, her concerns and actions are (and need to be) situated within her historical world of social and political interests. In her memoir she wants to give the impression that she has not left her social rank. She presents herself as one in command of her words, movements, what

she wears, how she is perceived by others, and of how she dies. Her social background remains intact. She also wants to present herself as one who transcends her femininity, as she battles and dies like a man. She is presented like a fierce Roman athlete engaged in the pancratium contest and wins the fight against the Egyptian (at least as depicted in her fourth dream, 10.1–13). She is male in battle (10.4) but female in receiving her prize and in her attention to her appearance (10.13; 20.4). The narrator/editor presents her as a true stoic Roman man who possesses *virtus* or excellence and courage over even the (supposedly) fierce gladiator in charge of killing her (21.9). Perpetua knows how to move within the social matrices of the empire.⁴⁰ She understands how to negotiate her various social and political contexts with a commanding presence (3.5; 16.2–3; 18.4–6). She resists the empire's representation of women and presents Christ as stronger than the Roman might (18.2–3). In the *Passio*, God is the new *paterfamilias*. Allegiance to the Christian family replaces commitment to the Roman family; the new Christian empire is envisioned to have replaced—or to be in the process of supplanting—the Roman Empire. However, the new model does not seem able to exist without mimicking the patterns of the old: God/Christ is the new emperor, and the exhibition of characteristics usually associated with a man is the norm. Slaves do not have agency and exist only as mere vulnerable bodies at the service of elite members of society.⁴¹ The sexualized violence of the empire, with the selection of a mad cow to match the women's sex (20.1), is rendered inoperative on Perpetua, although not on her fellow female martyr. Perpetua did not even realize that the cow had already hit her (20.8). It is as if the text is implying that the violence of the empire does not have any effect on the body of the noblewoman, rather, she transcends it.⁴²

The text renders the aggressiveness of the empire ineffective on a woman like Perpetua. Nevertheless, the slave woman is crushed by the sexualized violence of the empire. "Perpetua emerges as actively choosing death, while Felicitas succumbs to violence and penetration by the sword without resistance."⁴³ In her gesture of solidarity with the slave woman, Perpetua still manages to place herself as the one gazing at her fellow martyr and as the one offering Felicitas her hand. She knows how to negotiate the impact of the empire's violence but the slave woman is bruised by the power of torture. Felicitas' hope that "another inside me will suffer for me, since I will also be suffering for him (15.6)," does not seem to have been realized. There is no masculine performance on the part of Felicitas; there is no manifestation of a manly power, or the demonstration of an overpowering Christ inside her to help her fight and win or to suffer for her and assist her in her pain. The slave woman stands up as if she is a lost zombie. Perpetua's gesture towards Felicitas seems like a desperate attempt to enter into the world of the slave woman and to sympathize fully with her.

Earlier—and also modern—interpreters of the text do not seem to know what to do with Felicitas either. Brent Shaw, in an informative and often

quoted article, highlights how the earliest interpreters of the *Passio* have wrestled with the text and, especially, how they have tried to domesticate it by tampering with the dire realities faced by the martyrs in the process of overly theologizing the text.⁴⁴

For Shaw,

From the first editor and redactor, to Augustine, Quodvultdeus and beyond ... there is a monotonous sameness to their reactions. Their predictability stems not from any mechanical copying, but rather from a sameness in their perception of the problem. In that precise sense their writings, sermons and comments are not particularly forced or artificial. Given the irreducible feminine *duritia* of Perpetua's record, their reactions seem as logical and natural as antibodies surrounding a foreign viral infection.⁴⁵

Although one may concur with Shaw's analysis, there is one aspect he misses, namely the treatment of the slave Felicitas and the different interpretations of the place of the slave in the text. Shaw describes the absence of any mention of Felicitas by Perpetua as "puzzling," "given the joint attribution of the martyrology,"⁴⁶ and he tries to explain this treatment thus: "The lack of any reference to Felicitas in Perpetua's own words is perhaps understandable given her diary-like concentration on the self. But since Felicitas was apparently closely connected with her in the small group of Christians receiving instruction at Thuburbo Minus, was pregnant, and gave birth when she was in prison with Perpetua, the absence of any hint of her existence is worth noting."⁴⁷ J. W. Marshall, rightly, questions Shaw's suggestion when he highlights the fact that "this position ignores the room her 'diary' made for so many significant others in her life and experience apart from Felicitas."⁴⁸ The narrative shows the two women martyrs moving close to one another, yet, ultimately, distant from one another. There is no possible sisterhood between them. Even when Perpetua gives her hand to Felicitas, they are forever occupying two different worlds. Although they stand together at the end, they are both mothers, and they are the only two women in the group, they are portrayed differently and there is no close bond between them. Perpetua does not know what to make of the presence of the slave so close to her. Although they march towards the same spiritual reward, their social status, their demeanors, their experiences of the world, and even how they die are juxtaposed throughout the text with the view to show that one is an elite woman while the other a slave.

What is possible to deduce is that the figure of the slave Felicitas poses a problem. Earlier and modern interpreters are puzzled by such a slave woman martyr and, like the editor of the text, they do not know how to deal with her. Should she just be crushed in the text, around the text, and outside of the text, or should one give her a hand? Is it possible to let her have her own

agency and disturb the script and our interpretation of the narrative? Placing her squarely in the text means to let a subaltern speak. Letting her speak may help us uncover buried archives in questioning her silencing—both in the text itself and in the scholarly studies on this particular text. Looking at the text from below, that is from the perspective of the slave, indicates to us that consideration of factors such as empire, gender, and social positioning, is important if we want to answer the haunting question of why Felicitas is omitted.

6.3 Moving with Felicitas from the *Passio* to the *Acta*

There are two versions of the *Acta*. Van Beek is the one who named the versions *Acta*, which he identified as A and B.⁴⁹ This was a way for him to distinguish these variants from the text of the *Passio* in his edition of the different texts. Jacqueline Amat designates the two accounts of the *Acta* as I and II.⁵⁰ Both texts were originally written in Latin. Based on linguistic features, Amat concludes, “Que les *Actes* sont l’oeuvre d’un hagiographe, vraisemblablement assez ancien, sans être pour autant contemporain de la *Passion*. Il ne saurait guère être antérieur au Ve siècle. Les auteurs anciens ne s’y réfèrent pas.”⁵¹ Petr Kitzler considers that

Given the stylistic differences between the two recensions, it appears likely that they were composed by two different authors, with the author of recension *B* writing his version later. Another conclusion derived from a closer examination of the two versions of the *Acta* is that recension *B* presents more elements typical of the Augustinian reinterpretation of the *Passio* than does recension *A*, which indicates that its author must have been aware of Augustine’s view of the *Passio Perpetuae*.⁵²

For Jan N. Bremmer, “The *Acta* may well owe their continued existence to the late fourth-century Councils of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397), which decided that it was permitted to read the passions of the martyrs, when their anniversaries were celebrated. This renewed interest in the passions was probably caused by the struggle against the Donatists who had their own martyrs.”⁵³ The goal of the rewriting, recasting, readapting and reimagining of the *Acta* seems to have been to smooth out some “rough” edges that may have been considered problematic, abnormal, or as simply strange to most early Christian readers in order to normalize and to accommodate the narrative for the social, political, and theological contexts of a Christian audience in the middle of the fifth century.⁵⁴ Petr Kitzler concludes his monograph with this observation:

Given that fact that the *Acta Perpetuae* were cleansed of all the aspects which were already deemed problematic by Augustine, and

also given that they contained certain formulations which also appear in Augustine's sermons, we may hypothesize that the *Acta Perpetuae* (at least recension A, which is certainly older than recension B) were written by a disciple or follower of Augustine, well acquainted with his mentor's interpretation of the *Passio Perpetuae*, around the middle of the 5th century. The principal incentive behind such an adaptation was to produce a text conforming to the theological and social standards of its time—and to consign the story of Perpetua, Felicity, and their fellow martyrs once and for all to the realm of *admiranda, non imitanda*.⁵⁵

The *Acta* do seem to find aspects of the *Passio* problematic. The gender relationship is an important aspect. Women are put in their "appropriate" place. For example, the role ascribed to the woman Perpetua as the leader of the martyrs is clearly reversed in the *Acta*. A man fit for the task (the catechist Saturus) becomes the spokesperson for the group. But, there is also a change in how Felicitas is portrayed in the new accounts. She is no longer a shadowy and marginalized figure. Her interrogation takes up a considerable portion of recension A.

I am interested in how the figure of Felicitas is interpreted in moving from the narrative in Perpetua and Felicitas to the *Acta*. In order to understand how and why Felicitas is (re)imagined in the *Acta* and trying to capture the movements in interpretation, a simple table is proposed.

Comments

Felicitas moves from being a fellow slave to Revocatus in the *Passio* to being her sister in the *Acta*. In the *Acta*, she is interrogated by the proconsul, who seems sensitive to her case and urges her to live life instead of embracing death so early. In *Acta* I, Felicitas provides information about her husband. He is a man of the people, a plebeian. That information answers a genuine question that a reader might have concerning how she became pregnant. All three texts concur Felicitas was an eight-month-pregnant woman. In *Acta* II, however, her unborn baby is a burden (*onus*, 8.1a.) she is carrying. The versions are different on the timing of her delivery. In the *Passio*, she was in labor immediately after her companions in prison prayed for her (*post orationem*, 15.5). Then she gave birth to a baby girl. In *Acta* I, they prayed for her and suddenly (*subito*, 8.1b) she gave birth, but there is no indication of the sex of the newborn. In *Acta* II, she gave birth to a child—again no indication as to the sex of the infant—while her companions were praying for her (*qui dum in oratione persistent*, 8.1b). In the *Passio* and in *Acta* I, Felicitas suffers during labor. Her guard taunts her, but she comforts herself with the thought that the Lord will suffer on her behalf in the arena. In *Acta* II, she did not feel any pain in her delivery (9.2); in fact, she transcended her expected role in

Table 6.1

<i>Text of Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis</i>	<i>Acta I (A)</i>	<i>Acta II (B)</i>
Felicitas and Revocatus are fellow slaves (<i>conserva eius</i>), 2.1. There are no interrogation episodes Felicitas' companions in prison are sad at the prospect of abandoning her to be killed only after she gives birth. She was eight months pregnant, 15.2. They prayed for her and immediately after the prayer (<i>post orationem</i>), she was in labor, 15.5. She delivered a girl. One of the prison guard taunts her because of her sufferings, but she assures him she will not be the one in pain in the arena but the Lord will suffer on her behalf, 15.6. Felicitas and Perpetua are tortured by a fierce heifer in the amphitheater, 20.3–5. Felicitas, like the rest of the martyrs (except Perpetua), is killed by the sword without moving and in silence (<i>immobiles et cum silentio</i>), 21.8. The conclusion places the narrative in theological perspective (<i>O fortissimi ac beatissimi martyres! O vere vocati et electi in gloriam Domini nostri Iesu Christi!</i>), 21.11.	Felicitas is Revocatus' sister (<i>virii iuvenes Saturus et Saturninus, duo fratres, Revocatus et Felicitas, soror eius</i>), 1.1. Felicitas is interrogated by the proconsul and he wants to know whether she has a husband. She has one, but she despises him in the present time (<i>Habeo quem nunc contemno</i>), 5.3. Felicitas indicates to the proconsul that he is a plebeian (<i>Plebeius</i>), 5.5. After their interrogation, Felicitas and Perpetua are slapped in the face and beaten, 7.1. Felicitas' companions in prison are sad because of her fate, because she was eight months pregnant, 8.1a. They prayed for her and suddenly (<i>subito</i>) she gave birth to a child, 8.1b. One of the prison guard taunts her because of her sufferings, but she assures him she will not be the one in pain in the arena but the Lord will suffer on her behalf, 8.2. Revocatus and Felicitas are devoured by leopards in the amphitheater. However, the rendering of this event is put in a highly symbolic and theological expression (<i>Reuocatus et Felicitas a leopardis gloriosum agonem impleverunt</i>), 9.4.	Felicitas is Revocatus' sister (<i>Saturninus, Saturus, Revocatus, Felicitas et soror eius</i>), 1.1. Felicitas is interrogated by the proconsul. There is no enquiry whether she is married or not. He encourages her to have pity on herself in order to enjoy life as she is young (<i>Miserere tui, puella, ne uitae istius iucunditate et lucis splendore</i>), 5.3. Felicitas' companions in prison are sad because of her fate, because she was carrying a burden (<i>onus</i>) of eight months, 8.1a. They prayed for her and while they were praying (<i>qui dum in oratione persistent</i>) she gave birth to a child, 8.1b. Felicitas did not even ask for the help of a midwife. She did not feel any pain in her delivery, 9.2. She gave an example of courage not only to women, but also showed manly courage (<i>non solum femineo sexui, sed etiam uirili uirtuti praebebat exemplum</i>), 9.2b. Revocatus and Felicitas are devoured by leopards in the amphitheater. There is also a theological rationale given (<i>Ita his bestiarum saeuitiis coronis martyrum militantibus pretiosae animae regnis caelestibus et Domini aspectibus praesentantur</i>), 9.5.

society. The text portrays her as an example not only to women, but also as an exemplar of manly courage (*non solum femineo sexui, sed etiam uirili uirtuti praebebat exemplum*, 9.2b). In the *Passio*, Felicitas is the first mentioned as being tortured by a fierce heifer in the amphitheater. She was likely killed later on by the sword, silently and without movement (*immobiles et cum silentio*, 21.8). In the *Acta*, Revocatus is mentioned first, and then Felicitas; they are both devoured by leopards. Theology comes at the end of the narrative to frame the whole discourse in a much-aestheticized way.

In the *Acta*, the image of Felicitas is reinvented. She moves from someone without relatives in the *Passio* to one who belongs to a family. She has a brother, who is the representative of the martyrs. She speaks more than once, as she is engaged in business-like interrogation with the proconsul in *Acta* I. The text tries to characterize her as a decent woman who does the best she could in her circumstances by being in a steady relationship. She is a slave, but she has a husband who is a freedman. Although she despises him, the plausible question of whether she is a victim of her master's sexual abuses is avoided. In the last rendering of the narrative in *Acta* II, Felicitas is a strong woman who displays qualities associated with men; she becomes a *domina*.

The *Acta* can be read as texts of protest. There is a distinct protest against the position of Perpetua and how Felicitas is described in the *Passio*. Perpetua is now the one who is silenced. Her numerous dreams, her authoritative demeanor, and her pretensions to being in control everywhere she goes, are effaced in the *Acta*. One could argue that the *Acta* are silencing the voices of women based on the treatment of the character Perpetua, but that would miss the fact that women seldom speak in the *Passio*; only Perpetua as a woman spoke at length—Felicitas only once. In the *Acta*, the slave Felicitas gains a certain agency. She speaks on more than one occasion, and becomes a clear example of (manly) courage; she is a martyr on the same level as all the others. There is no heroine with a different outcome in death; all the captured Christians are martyred similarly. They all become celebrities that others can admire as examples of what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ in times of persecution under a violent empire.

The *Acta* can also be conceived as documents of protest that stand up against what might have been perceived as “abnormal” or as “improper” activities and postures for a Christian text to display. These abnormalities include the leadership of a woman, the rejection of male hierarchy; the pregnancy of women with no mention of husbands, the portrayal of a woman fighting like a man (even in a vision),⁵⁶ the male gaze at the almost pornographic view of the women in the arena, the daring act of guiding a gladiator's sword at one's throat, the facts of marginalizing a fellow mother and co-martyr in order to show one's faith, courage, and social standing. All of these performances and depictions, from the perspective of the *Acta*, are to be avoided in Christian literature.

One question still worth pondering is do the *Acta* have a different position on the social slave status of Felicitas? In these texts' protest against the elevated position of *domina* Perpetua in the *Passio*, they present Felicitas in a less vulnerable way. Felicitas is not even introduced as a slave. She is not an exposed body leaking both milk and blood, as she is in the *Passio*. Felicitas is not a lifeless figure waiting for her know-it-all and can-do-all co-martyr to pick her up after being gored by a mad cow. She is not standing and waiting for her death by the sword, alongside other silent martyrs. In the *Acta*, she is devoured by the leopards, like all the other martyrs. There is no special lady. They are all interrogated; Felicitas and Perpetua are both slapped in the face and beaten. There is no one pleading for any better treatment; they are all united in the way they die. It could be argued, then, that the interest of the *Acta* is not in the social status of the martyrs but on how they stood together as one, under the "proper" leadership of a male. The *Acta* wanted to maintain the status quo regarding male leadership, although while doing so these texts may have planted a few seeds for questioning the representation of slaves, at least in Christian texts. Stating that does not mean that the *Acta* challenge the social position of slaves in Christianity in the time of their composition. The identity of Felicitas as slave is carefully managed in order to address other concerns. Her slave status is just part and parcel of the texts' worldview. In this way, Felicitas is used by the writers and editors of the *Acta* to advance particular theological arguments. In sum, the *Acta* do not have a different position on the social status of Felicitas.

6.4 From Felicitas to Blandina

The presentation of Blandina's martyrdom in Gaul in 177 C.E. has a clear theological framework. Eusebius relates this story in order to show that through Blandina, "Christ proved that things which men regard as mean, unlovely, and contemptible are by God deemed worthy of great glory, because of her love for Him shown in power and not vaunted in appearance" (δι' ἧς ἐπέδειξεν ὁ Χριστὸς ὅτι τὰ παρὰ ἀνθρώποις εὐτελῆ καὶ ἀειδῆ καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητα φαινόμενα μεγάλης καταξιούται παρὰ θεῷ δόξης διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην τὴν ἐν δυνάμει δεικνυμένην καὶ μὴ ἐν εἵδει καυχωμένην).⁵⁷ Blandina is presented as not having anything worthy of admiration in her appearance. She is depicted as one whose body people would regard as despicable, unattractive, contemptible, and shameful, but because of her love for Christ, his power is made manifest through her. My goal in analyzing the martyrdom of Blandina is to show that her status as a vile body remains and is reinforced throughout the narrative; her traumatized body is used as a site for displaying the violence of the empire with the hope of the resurrection of something other than her battered body. In other words, Blandina is used as an ideological construct for larger theological purposes.

Blandina is a slave body that, the author purports to show, is not afraid to be subjected to every kind of torture from dawn to dark (5.1.18). She endures so much that even those who kept on beating her became exhausted; they could not think of any other forms of torture they could have resorted to in order to cause her more pain. "They were amazed that she was still breathing, for her whole body was mangled and her wounds gaped. They declared that torment of any kind was enough to part soul and body, let alone a succession of torments of such extreme severity" (5.1.18). Blandina's excessive sufferings are displayed in a repulsive manner.

The slave status of Blandina is clearly demonstrated from the outset of the narrative; her status is displayed through her habitus and the abject presentation of her body. Unlike Perpetua, Blandina does not leave a "diary"; instead, we learn about her terrible tortures through the theological work of a (free) male Christian, who admired heroism and is reflecting on the theological significance of some Christian martyrs.⁵⁸ Unlike Felicitas, Blandina is not associated with any other female character. She does not have an infant either. Blandina is merely a cheap and worthless body ready to be offered up in sacrifice. The mention of her mistress, who was herself facing the ordeal of martyrdom, is brief. The mistress is presented as afraid of potentially denying Christ "because of bodily weakness" (διὰ τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ σώματος, 5.1.18).⁵⁹ So Blandina is presumed to have had a body that is habituated to receiving corporal punishments, which would enable her to receive the blows.

Blandina is presented as a "blessed woman" (ἡ μακαρία, 5.1.19). The author asserts that she grew in strength as she proclaimed her faith, and she was able to become insensitive to the sufferings she was subjected to. She testified: "I am a Christian: We do nothing to be ashamed of" (Χριστιανὴ εἰμι καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν οὐδὲν φαῦλον γίνεται, 5.1.19). The theological argument from the author is that by accepting to suffer for the cause of Christ, one becomes blessed and thus can transcend human pains, if not their social status, in order to serve as a model for others to emulate. The apologetic reasoning is that one can testify to being a Christian in the midst of persecution, because they have done nothing to be ashamed of. It is interesting to note that no other body than a slave body accustomed to beatings is constructed for displaying the theological reasoning of the common "we."⁶⁰ The "I am a Christian" is subsumed under "we do nothing to be ashamed of" in order to identify and merge as one with the community. However, it is the slave body that confesses for the group, and it is the slave body that is publicly displayed in all its crudeness.

Blandina also becomes the mouthpiece of a particular religious discourse, which uses her slave body as a site for transgression. The vulnerable body of the slave is made a malleable toy in the hands of the representatives of the Roman power. They turned her body into an object they can play with at will. However, the plaything her body represents in their hands made them admit they had never witnessed a woman suffer so much before (5.1.56); their

inhumanity is made visible through the wounds on the woman slave's body. Theologically, her battered body renders the very crude reality of the empire evident. Through Blandina, the ugliness of the empire's violence is made altogether repugnant.

Blandina is portrayed as a mirror image of the crucified Christ: "Blandina was hung on a post and exposed as food for the wild beasts let loose in the arena. She looked as if she was hanging in the form of a cross ..." (ἡ δὲ Βλανδῖνα ἐπὶ ξύλου κρεμασθεῖσα προύκειτο βορὰ τῶν εἰσβαλλομένων θηρίων· ἡ καὶ διὰ τοῦ βλέπεσθαι σταυροῦ σχήματι κρεμαμένη ..., 5.1.40). The other Christian martyrs, in their agony, saw Christ himself in Blandina, who was crucified for them. Does that suggest her gender and her status as a slave are no longer important in the eyes of her fellow martyrs, at least as presented by the author? It is not at all clear. The tendency in the discourse is to prioritize something other—I hesitate to call it the "soul"—than the abused body of the slave woman. Beyond the theological reasoning, the author seems to advance that Blandina, through her pains, transcends her gender and her social status. By means of the slave woman, Christ wants to show and to convince those who believe in him, that "any man who has suffered for the glory of Christ has fellowship forever with the living God" (ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑπὲρ τῆς Χριστοῦ δόξης παθὼν τὴν κοινωνίαν αἰεὶ ἔχει μετὰ τοῦ ζῶντος θεοῦ, 5.1.41). What may have been done to her in the spiritual realm, nevertheless, does not translate into erasing the social hierarchy exhibited in her flesh; equality in the spirit does not lead to transcendence of gender differences. Blandina's exposed body might well be seen by the other martyrs as a crucified Christ, but she is forever a slave woman hung on a cross as an object to be gazed at. The author insists on pointing out Blandina's identity as "a small, weak, despised (ἡ μικρὰ καὶ ἀσθενὴς καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητος) woman who had put on Christ" and "through conflict had won the crown of immortality" (δι' ἀγῶνος τὸν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας στεψαμένη στέφανον, 5.1.42). The author echoes what Felicitas said to the jailer who taunted her: that Christ will be the one suffering on her behalf. In the case of Blandina, the author seems to indicate that Blandina is not herself; she is no longer the despised slave woman, but is clothed with Christ and, through him, she is the beneficiary of the crown of immortality.

The theological discourse does not have any regard for the social conditions of the slave woman. The interest is not in the corporeality of Blandina. She does not exist; she vanishes. She only finds significance in the theological example that she is made to become; Christ is elevated through the bruised body of the slave woman. Her life of misery is projected to have any meaning only by way of the theological hope of receiving "the crown of immortality." Through her scourged slave body, the community of fellow martyrs finds inspiration. Contrary to the conclusion of Candida R. Moss, the ugly slave Blandina does not become "the leader and source of consolation for a whole group of martyrs, rising from her lowly position as a sexually undesirable slave to the head of this elite group."⁶¹ Instead, Blandina is a means by which

other martyrs can convince themselves that if this frail body of a slave woman can endure the blows, so can they. Blandina is made to become the object of admiration and a source of motivation for other Christians to face death. One recalls that Blandina's mistress is also one who is detained and is in agony because of her own weak body. She is not habituated to have her body violated, degraded, and assaulted. Blandina is projected on a cross as a way to encourage an elite woman like the mistress to not deny Christ, but to understand that through suffering for him she can truly be like him. No other martyr is depicted as enduring abuse like the slave Blandina. It is as if the text assumes that her body can be taken for granted; that her body is made to be pummeled.

Blandina does not speak much in the text. In fact, she is out of breath, so she cannot speak much. But the narrator assures the reader she is content and that she has defeated her adversary "and through conflict had won the crown of immortality." We cannot affirm that we know what Blandina said. The few words she utters are constructed out of the author's ideology about a slave's death for the Christian cause. Blandina is used as a demonstration of a slave who embraces the Christian faith and thus transcends, at least spiritually, her gender and social identity to perform Christ. In this way, the text invites slaves to become like Blandina, to imitate Christ's passion and, *inter alia*, to assure Christian masters that if they have slaves like Blandina these slaves will remain faithful to them until the end.⁶²

Blandina's conduct is different from that of slaves who betrayed their masters. She was tortured and she remained faithful to the religious views of her owners—at least those of her mistress. She is constructed from a particular Christian perspective as one who is faithful in embracing the faith of her mistress and one who, by becoming an imitator of Christ through suffering, will have eternal fellowship with God. This is theological construction; it does not have anything to do with social reality. Her abused body is made "to exemplify one somatic mode of Christian faithfulness. In their endurance of whippings, slaves were thought to have privileged knowledge of the passion of Christ."⁶³ Blandina's voice is not her own, but that of male Christian masters who needed slave bodies to carry out and demonstrate their social and political ideologies of resistance to, and of eventual triumph over, the empire in order to become similar to the empire.⁶⁴

The death of Blandina serves as a canvas to express not only a contest between the Christians and the Roman Empire but, ultimately, to present a cosmic battle between the Christian God and the devil, portrayed as the "crooked serpent" (σκολιῷ ὄφει, 5.1.42). The text envisions not simply the rearranging of the immediate geographical contexts, but the reimagining and the re-describing of the whole cosmos by and for the benefit of those who would accept the Christian faith embraced by Blandina and people like her. Blandina's death has implications that go beyond the individual dimension because her Christ-like death seems to signal the re-creation and the

rearranging of the whole cosmos. Candida R. Moss' analysis on the cosmic importance of Blandina's death is worth quoting at length, although her conclusion differs from mine. She states:

The incarnation of the devil as the crooked serpent could be understood either as an allusion to the fall of humanity in Genesis or as a reference to the primordial beast Leviathan (Isa 27:1). The former reading would place the work of Christ in Blandina firmly within the scope of salvation history. The curse brought about by the serpent is fulfilled and subverted by the martyr's death. Blandina crushes the serpent and dismantles the primordial events that led to the existence of the curse. Relating Blandina to events in Genesis gives her death a cosmic significance. The permanency of the effect of her death is highlighted as of great cosmic importance.⁶⁵

Eusebius is an intellectual (re)imagining history. He contemplates a narrative that places Christ, Blandina, and others who put on Christ, as victorious over the devil and restoring the world to its primordial state. The author is engaged in the politics of myth-making in contemplating Christ and his faithful as the champions and guardians of a new social order in the early fourth century.⁶⁶ The intellectual activity put in this narrative is to situate the Christians—and maybe more precisely to position the intellectuals in this movement—vis-à-vis the fading Roman world. In other words, the exercise of revisiting history and of placing Blandina's death within a constant cosmic struggle may be to better place the Christians, especially the Christian thinkers, theologians, and apologists, within it. The conflict between the twisted serpent and God turns into the struggle between the devil and those in Christ. The contest of the martyrs is part of a greater struggle that encompasses something beyond them; it is a cosmic conflict over ways in which the world can be governed.

The rhetorical force of the argument, as I read the text, is that the devil, through the representatives of the Roman Empire, acts as a voracious beast that is deemed unfit to rule, whereas the Christians exhibit humanity and athletic endurance that may help turn the world into a caring and hospitable space. The victory over evil is depicted as conquering not only the devil and its acolytes, but it is also framed as the rearrangement and realignment of the cosmos. The victorious Christ assumes, imaginatively, the position of the new emperor to whom all dominion is subjected. The military battle engaged through the slave body is "to show how deployments of power are directly connected to the body."⁶⁷ Blandina's identity vanishes; Christ's supplants it. The military battle for the undoing of the primordial curse and the conquest of the cosmos is Christ's doing. Christ possesses the slave body in order to articulate a power that is deemed much more authoritative and much more powerful and competent than that of Satan and the Roman Empire.

Blandina's body is an open space that is inhabited by Christ for the sake of showing his power. If the theological reading points to the understanding that Christ's power is made manifest through lowliness and weakness, and that the abased figure of a woman slave is elevated through her suffering by becoming like him to hang in the form of a cross, the social and political analysis problematizes this reading to point out that Blandina is made to be the locus of a cosmic struggle for hegemony that is not hers, or ideologies unconcerned with people like her. In other words, the interest in the use of Blandina is to jockey for power for strong masculine proponents in a developing Christian empire. The text wants to convey a sense that the enslaved woman is content with her fate to receive the crown of glory in eternity, but she does not benefit in the here and now from the highly theological salvation history the text tries to place her within. Her body is brutalized to show both the inhumanity of the enemy of the Christian faith—the demonization of those with whom one does not agree—and how the powerful Christ finds victory and glory through the dejected and possessed body of a slave woman.

Eusebius refers to love as the instrument that allowed the martyrs to endure the tortures and to vanquish the devil: "Because of the sincerity of their love this became the greatest of all the contests which they waged against the Demon, to the end that the throttled Beast might be forced to disgorge alive all those whom he at first thought he had devoured" (2.6). Love is here presented as an act of resistance and as subversive action. Because of their love, the Demon is forced to vomit them. "The victory over evil is accomplished through love and also by virtue of Christly possession."⁶⁸ However, love is a theological construct that hides important complexities in the narrative. Blandina's presumed love for her mistress cannot be the same for her executioners. The author uses love as a discursive shortcut to encourage unconditional submission to the machinations of empire. Slavery as a great evil is not resisted or even denounced. The rhetoric of the text is that demons may well annihilate their bodies, and the slave body of Blandina may well be subjected to every variety of torture and atrocity and suffer more than any other woman (5.56), but she—or another dimension of her being that is different from her body—will be vomited; they will not be allowed to be consumed by the beast. Her love for Christ will allow her and her co-martyrs to be with him at death in the heavenly bridal chamber to receive their post-mortem rewards.⁶⁹ Blessed Blandina (ἡ μακαρία) is projected to find her place in heaven; her body on earth, however, can be tortured and manipulated to express otherworldly, theological, and cosmic concerns.

6.5 Summary and conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to focus on the female slaves Felicitas and Blandina in order to argue that in the early Christian martyr narratives female slaves are used to advance particular theological conclusions, with no

interest in them as violated bodies. In the *Passio*, Felicitas is relegated to a shadowy figure who exists primarily as mere background to the commanding presence of *domina* Perpetua. The narrative assures the reader that the social gulf that exists between a slave and a *domina* is not crossed, even when they face the same outcome in death. The noblewoman is always leading; she knows how to negotiate different spaces and how to move others. She even chooses how to die; honorably like a strong man. In contrast, Felicitas ends in silence.

The portrayal of the figure of Felicitas puzzled early Christian readers. The editing of her story in the *Acta* is the result of certain malaise. In the *Acta*, the image of Felicitas is reinvented in order to find equilibrium to the narrative that was set in the *Passio*. The *Acta* turn the *Passio* upside down in various ways. Felicitas is as strong as a man; Perpetua becomes a shadowy figure who is silenced. The *Acta* may well be conceived as texts of protest. However, they do not question or challenge the social position of slaves in Christianity in the times of their compositions. Rather, the writers and editors of the *Acta* use Felicitas to advance particular theological arguments that assure the “proper” leadership of males, with no interest in the social slave status of Felicitas.

Blandina’s narrative also participates in the overall discourse of using the female slave body to express theological arguments that contain no concerns for their violated bodies. Blandina is utterly alone. The presentations of Felicitas managed to associate her with someone else, either as a fellow slave, to an infant growing inside of her, or to a husband she may have rejected. Blandina, however, is on her own with her weak, ugly, and disposable body. She was tortured to the extreme, beyond anything that was done to any other woman, to the point her torturers were themselves exhausted, not knowing what else to do to her. Apart from the theological confession, “I am a Christian: We do nothing to be ashamed of,” Blandina is out of breath, and out of sight. She vanishes to leave Christ and the male theologians to take center stage to do their performances. Blandina is used and abused in the myth-making process of early Christian discourse concerned with social, political, and theological visions that are foreign to her.⁷⁰

One point that this chapter makes is that the early Christian narratives in which female slaves feature are about projections and contestations. Within these narratives, there are readings and interpretations that are projected as the norm, or even as challenging to the norm, yet they are themselves reinterpreted, resignified, and reimagined. On the one hand, the *Passio* may be understood as a text of protest in presenting an articulate young noblewoman who pushes some gender boundaries and shares the first surviving *journal intime* from antiquity we possess. Perpetua’s social reality, however, elides the existence of others, namely that of her co-female, co-mother, and co-martyr Felicitas. The *Acta*, on the other hand, contest the perpetuation of social class that presents a mistress who places herself as the leader, in disregard to other members of the Christian community, especially in relation to a female co-martyr. However, the protest of the *Acta* is also engulfed in the project of



Figure 6.1 This fresco shows, in the background, a figure smaller in stature than the other two figures. The figure is either a child, a slave, or is being depicted smaller because he or she is of less significance than the others.

© Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY. Description: Young man and a courtesan. Wall painting from Pompeii. Location: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy.

reinforcing what are projected as “normal/proper” behaviors of women, especially Christian women. The narrative of Blandina protests against the brutality of the empire and places the body of a slave woman in a similar position to Christ to show that God’s power works through weakness. Nevertheless, Blandina’s body is of no interest in a narrative that is mostly concerned with showing how cosmic struggles against the devil are won. Finally, and in line with the dynamics of projections and contestations observed in the accounts considered in this chapter, maybe these texts can be deconstructed and conceived as an invitation to readers to continue the

struggles of reimagining creatively and re-signifying them with the view to protest against the utilization of slave bodies (or any bodies), and be engaged in social and political realities in the *hic et nunc*.

Notes

- 1 See Stuart G. Hall, "Women among the Early Martyrs," in *Martyrs and Martyrologies* (ed. Diana Wood; London: Blackwell, 1993), 1–21.
- 2 To situate the text in its literary and socio-political contexts see, in particular, Herbert Musurillo, ed. and trans., "The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas," in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 106–171; Rosemary Rader, "The Martyrdom of Perpetua: A Protest Account of Third-Century Christianity," in *A Lost Tradition: Women Writers of The Early Church* (comp. and trans. Patricia Wilson-Kastner, G. Ronald Kastner, Ann Millin, Rosemary Rader and Jeremiah Reedy; Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 19–32; Jacqueline Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes* (intro., ed., trans., annot. and index, SC 417; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996); Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, "Perpetua's Passions: A brief Introduction," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–13.
- 3 David Potter thinks that the original was Greek, although I do not. See David Potter, "Martyrdom as Spectacle," in *Theater and Society in the Classical World* (ed. Ruth Scodel; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 53–88. See the discussions on the language of composition in Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79–99.
- 4 Jan den Boeft suggests that the editor may have been someone who belonged to a circle around Tertullian. See Jan den Boeft, "The Editor's Prime Objective: *Haec in Aedificationem Ecclesiae Legere*," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 169–179.
- 5 This statement, I recognize, is slightly inaccurate. Better: The narrative contains an account that many scholars hold to have been written by Perpetua herself and redacted by a redactor who had his own literary, theological and social agendas. In this sense, it can be difficult for a reader to differentiate Perpetua's voice from the editor's. See among others Heffernan, *The Passion*, 76–77. W. H. Shewring distinguishes three distinct styles of Latin for the editor, Perpetua and Saturus. See Shewring, "Prose Rhythm in the *Passio S. Perpetuae*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1928): 56–57.
- 6 See Marco Formisano, "Perpetua's Prisons: Notes on the Margins of Literature," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 330.
- 7 The title by which this text is traditionally referred to was not its original title. According to Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, "The older manuscripts mostly lack the beginning and/or the title, but the *Codex Einsidlensis* 250 (c. XII) has the title *Passio sanctorum Revocati Saturni Perpetuae et Felicitatis* and a lost *codex Lareshamensis* bore the title *Passio sancti Saturninini et sancti Saturis, Felicitatis et Perpetuae*." See *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 2. In these manuscripts, place is given to the male rather than the female martyrs at the forefront. See, however, J. N. Bremmer, "The Motivation of Martyrs. Perpetua and the Palestinians," in *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs*. Festschrift für Hans Kippenberg zu seinem 65 (eds. B. Luchesi and K. von Stuckrad; Geburtstag, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 535–554, here 542.

- 8 The only contribution, which I am aware of, that focusses on Felicitas is Jan N. Bremmer's "Felicitas: The Martyrdom of a Young African Woman," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 35–53.
- 9 James W. Halporn is doubtful that *conserva* needs to mean slave. For him, *conserva* can also mean in this context fellow servant in Christ (or even his sister, as in the *Acta*). Halporn argues that Felicitas' single name tells us that she was of low status, but not necessarily a slave. See Halporn, "Literary History and Generic Expectations in the *Passio* and *Acta Perpetuae*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 223–241.
- 10 It is possible, as Thomas J. Heffernan suggests, that Felicitas and Revocatus could have been members of the same *domus*, based on their pairing in the text. See Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19. I use the new translation provided by Joseph Farrell and Craig Williams in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 14–23. *Conserva* and the Greek σύνδουλοι could simply mean that they (Felicitas and Revocatus) were both slaves but not married. Although Saturninus and Secundulus could also have been slaves, only Felicitas and Revocatus are clearly identified as such.
- 11 See Lily Vuong, "The Impact of Social and Economic Status on the Experience of Martyrdom: A Case Study of Perpetua and Felicitas," in *Purity, Holiness, and Identity in Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Memory of Susan Haber* (eds., Carl S. Ehrlich, Anders Runesson and Eileen Schuller; Tübingen: Mohr Sibeck, 2013), 224–249.
- 12 For possible explanations of the absence of Perpetua's husband in the narrative see, for example, Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porette* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 282–283; Carolyn Osiek, "Perpetua's Husband," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 287–290; Danny Praet, "Meliore cupide detentus": Christian self-definition and the rejection of marriage in the early Acts of the Martyrs," *Euphrosyne* 31 (2003): 465–468; Peter Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter oder Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum: Ein Versuch zur Passio sanctarum Perpetua [sic] et Felicitatis*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 60–63.
- 13 J. W. Marshall, "Postcolonial Theory and Historical-Critical Practice," in *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical-Critical Discourse* (ed. T. Penner and C. Van der Stichele; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 93–94.
- 14 On exposed infants in antiquity see among others Cynthia Patterson, "'Not Worth the Rearing': The Causes of Infant Exposure in Ancient Greece," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115 (1985): 103–123; W. Harris, "The Theoretical Possibility of Extensive Infanticide in the Graeco-Roman World," *Classical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 114–116; Idem., "Child-Exposure in the Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 1–22; R. Motomura, "The Practice of Exposing Infants and Its Effects on the Development of Slavery in the Ancient World," in *Forms of Control and Subordination in Antiquity* (eds. T. Yuge and M. Doi; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 410–415; Erkki Koskeniemi, *The Exposure of Infants among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009); W. Scheidel, "The Roman Slave Supply," in *The Cambridge History of World Slavery. Volume 1: The Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Keith Bradley and P. A. Cartledge; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 287–310.
- 15 Slaves depended on their masters to decide to whom and when they could be married. See K. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters: A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 48.

- 16 It was simply taken for granted that a slave was supposed to be available to satisfy the sexual urges of his/her master(s)/mistress(es). See Jerzy Kolendo, "L'esclavage et la vie sexuelle des hommes libres à Rome," *Index* 10 (1981): 288–297; Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 28–29; Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9–26; Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Roman World, AD 275–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 284–285.
- 17 Anna R. Slevåg considers that "what characterizes Felicitas most is that she is alone." See Slevåg, "Perpetua and Felicitas—Reinterpreting Empire, Family and Gender," in *Identity Formation in the New Testament* (eds., Bengt Holmberg and Mikael Winnige; Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 279. However, cf. Heffernan, *The Passion*, 19–20, who sketches some possibilities of her social ties.
- 18 Slevåg, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 284.
- 19 It was common for a slave in antiquity to have been sold and resold and to live in constant trauma of being sold once again as a commodity to a potential buyer. K. Bradley states, "Throughout the Mediterranean ... slaves were bought and sold from one owner to another as a matter of course ... part of what the Roman jurist Papinian once offhandedly termed 'the regular, daily traffic in slaves'." See Bradley, "'The Regular, Daily Traffic in Slaves': Roman History and Contemporary History," *Classical Journal* 87 (1992): 126.
- 20 Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 59.
- 21 The Greek text does not provide this detail.
- 22 Keith Bradley asks a pertinent question that is in line with the reflection undertaken here: "As for Christian slave martyrs, who can deny that some may have been motivated to sacrifice their lives by the hope of a reward that eradicated for all eternity the rigors of enslavement and allowed entry into a community of the blessed?" See Bradley, "Engaging with Slavery," *Biblical Interpretation* 21–4–5 (2013): 533–546 (here 541).
- 23 Thomas J. Heffernan suggests that Felicitas could have been in an intimate relationship with her fellow slave as her conjugal partner. See Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 19. Since under Roman law a slave could not acknowledge a child as his or her own, it is within the realm of possibility that the father of Felicitas' baby could be a fellow slave, but I hesitate to conclude that her child is from the bond slave Revocatus. The suggestions I am making regarding how Felicitas became pregnant are also speculations based on possibilities and not clearly based on evidence stemming from the text.
- 24 However, the child could also be valuable economically to the owner. This scenario may not be altogether historically accurate, or it may have been created by the editor to give the story a "happy ending" in respect to the child.
- 25 Contrary to Heffernan, I do not see the slave's status of Felicitas as ambiguous. See Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 310: "Felicity's status is ambiguous. She is called *conserva* (slave) when we first encounter her (II.1). Yet here her autonomy appears to be underscored, since the child is not given to an owner but presumably to someone of her choosing."
- 26 The narrative presents Perpetua as more torn and worried about her child than Felicitas. One may wonder whether this is a construction relying on societal expectations that slave mothers were not as attached to their children as free mothers. See Anna R. Slevåg, *Birthing Salvation: Gender and Class in Early Christian Childbearing Discourse*. Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 6, and especially chapter 5 on Perpetua and Felicitas. One may also imagine

- that if the baby has been the fruit of violence, perhaps from the owner of Felicitas, she might have been eager to give it away.
- 27 "Diary" is placed in scare quotes because it is evident that the (presumably male) editor/redactor has edited the text of Perpetua.
 - 28 See Craig Williams, "Perpetua's Gender. A Latinist Reads the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 62.
 - 29 Marshall, "Postcolonial Theory," 103. The male redactor (and perhaps even Perpetua herself) has less interest in Felicitas because she was a slave, and not as "note-worthy" as the upper-class Perpetua. Another reason why Perpetua is more in the spotlight is that she did leave her memoir, and thus it would make sense for the redactor to expand on it with materials that pertained to her. See also Kate Cooper on the voice of Perpetua in prison, "The Voice of the Victim: Gender, Representation and Early Christian Martyrdom," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 80.3 (1998): 147–157, special issue on *Representation, Gender and Experience* edited by Grace M. Jantzen. However, I want to assert that the voicelessness of Felicitas is also necessary to mention. It is also important to explore the social, theological, rhetorical and literary constructions that allow such silence.
 - 30 Anne Carson, in the context of the ancient Greek world, has made this observation about the perception of the female body: "[W]oman's boundaries are pliant, porous, mutable. Her power to control them is inadequate, her concern for them unreliable. Deformation attends her. She swells, she shrinks, she leaks, she is penetrated, she suffers metamorphoses." See Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place: Women, Dirt, and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (eds., D. M. Halperin, J. T. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 154. For a larger context see Kathryn Chew, "The Representation of Violence in the Greek Novels and Martyr Accounts," in *The Ancient Novel and Beyond* (eds., Stelios Panayotakis, Maaïke Zimmerman and Wytse Keulen; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 129–141.
 - 31 See Brian P. Sowers, "Pudor et Dedecus: Rhetoric of Honor and Shame in Perpetua's Passion," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23.3 (2015): 363–388.
 - 32 See Craig Williams, "Perpetua's Gender," 68.
 - 33 Solevåg, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 276.
 - 34 Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 112. See also Judith Perkins, *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era*, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies (London: Routledge, 2008).
 - 35 See Virginia Burrus, *Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 2008); Carlin A. Barton, "Being in the Eyes: Shame and Sight in Ancient Rome," in *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power and the Body* (ed. David Fredrick; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 216–236.
 - 36 Jacqueline Amat puts it beautifully: "Félicité meurt, comme les autres, sans un cri." See Jacqueline Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes* (intro., ed., trans., annot. and index, SC 417; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996), 36.
 - 37 In other words, "There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses." See *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (ed. David Couzens Hoy; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 931.
 - 38 On haunting as a conceptual rubric that can offer fresh insights in the field of New Testament and early Christian studies, see Denise Kimber Buell, "God's Own People: Specters of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Christian Studies," in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in*

- Early Christian Studies* (eds. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth S. Fiorenza; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 159–190.
- 39 Marshall, “Postcolonial Theory,” 101.
- 40 The redactor’s construction of the two women is a factor to consider and one may certainly question whether the text, as we have it, can tell us anything about Perpetua’s self-perception.
- 41 I am here inspired by Solevåg: “The *Passio* partakes in this Christian discourse by reinterpreting the concepts of empire, family and gender. In this Christian narrative, the Roman Empire is superseded in power by God’s kingdom, and the Roman family is replaced by the Christian family, in which God is the father.” See Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 270.
- 42 See L. Stephanie Cobb, *Divine Deliverance: Pain and Painlessness in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), which makes precisely this point in the case of various martyr narratives. See also Rosie Ratcliffe, “The Acts of Paul and Thecla: Violating the Inviolable Body—Thecla Uncut,” in *The Body in Biblical, Christian and Jewish Texts* (ed. Joan E. Taylor; London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2014), 184–209, in the case of the martyrdom of Thecla.
- 43 Solevåg, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 277. I understand how complex it is to distance Perpetua’s voice from that of the redactor. It may be she is presented thus to conform to some male writer’s masculinization of valorous women, including in confronting death and torture. To note but one treatment of this phenomenon see Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2007).
- 44 Brent D. Shaw, “The passion of Perpetua,” *Past and Present* 139 (1993): 3–45; reprinted with a “Postscript 2003” in *Studies in Ancient Greek and Roman Society* (ed. R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 286–325.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 322.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 305.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 Marshall, “Postcolonial Theory,” 103. In fact, the only ones who are given space in her narrative are her father and her late brother. See Kate Cooper, “A Father, a Daughter, and a Procurator: Authority and Resistance in the Prison Memoir of Perpetua of Carthage,” *Gender and History* 23.3 (2011): 685–702.
- 49 Cornelius I. M. I van Beek, ed., *Passio Xanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis, vol. I: Textum Graecum et Latinum ... Accedunt Acta brevia SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (Noviomagi: Dekker et Van De Vegt, 1936).
- 50 Jacqueline Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes* (Paris: Cerf, 1996).
- 51 *Ibid.*, “Introduction,” 271.
- 52 The only recent work that has examined the relationship of the *Passio* to the *Acta* is that of Petr Kitzler, *From “Passio Perpetuae” to “Acta Perpetuae”: Recontextualizing a Martyr Story in the Literature of the Early Church*. Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 127 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 105; Idem, “Passio Perpetuae and Acta Perpetuae: Between Tradition and Innovation,” *Listy Filologické (Folia Philologica)* 130 (2007): 1–19.
- 53 Jan N. Bremmer’s “Felicitas: The Martyrdom of a Young African Woman,” in *Perpetua’s Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches*, 39. On the Donatist struggle, see Brent D. Shaw’s book, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

- 54 I am here paraphrasing Petr Kizler who thinks that “It appears that the primary objective of *Acta Perpetuae A* was to normalize the contents of the original *Passio Perpetuae*, which the author of this version of the *Acta* was directly working from. Conversely, the author of *Acta Perpetuae B* likely used the already existing recension *A* as the pre-text in writing his adaptation, and his motivation may have been to embellish the text rhetorically and make both its language and its style more congruent with the literary conventions of the established hagiography.” See Petr Kitzler, *From “Passio Perpetuae” to “Acta Perpetuae,”* 114. Brent D. Shaw’s position on the versions of Felicitas and Perpetua in the *Acta* is that the later editors were quite troubled by the women’s deviation from their family ties and sought to correct this by inserting husbands. I agree with him. The later *Acta* versions have been rewritten to try to correct various issues in the original *Passio* that were perceived as troubling. See Shaw, “The Passion of Perpetua,” in *Studies in Ancient Greek and Roman Society* (ed. Robin Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 286–325 (here, 312–314).
- 55 Petr Kitzler, *From “Passio Perpetuae” to “Acta Perpetuae,”* 122.
- 56 See L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Barbara Gold, “‘And I Became a Man’: Gender Fluidity and Closure in Perpetua’s Prison Narrative,” in *Roman Literature, Gender, and Reception: Domina Illustris. Essays in Honor of Judith Peller Hallett* (ed. D. Lateiner, Barbara Gold and J. Perkins; New York: Routledge, 2013), 153–165; Anders K. Petersen, “Gender-bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Literature,” in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (eds. Jakob Engberg, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen and Anders Klostergaard Petersen; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), 225–256; see also Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
- 57 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5.1.17. The translation adopted is that of G. A. Williamson in *Eusebius: The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (translated with an introduction by G. A. Williamson; NY: Dorset Press, 1965). See also W. H. C. Frend, “Blandina and Perpetua: Two Early Christian Heroines,” in *Les Martyrs de Lyon (177)* (eds. J. Rouge and R. Turcan; Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1978), 167–177, repr. in D. Scholer, ed., *Women in Early Christianity* (New York: Garland, 1993), 87–97.
- 58 Eusebius wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* in the early decades of the fourth century. The accounts of martyrs were important to him as he found them to be inspiring stories. He was never a martyr, although he experienced imprisonment and ran the risk of death. See Robert M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 121–124.
- 59 The other mention in the narrative of an imprisoned Christian with a weak body is that of Pothinus. He was over 90 years of age. Although physically weak the author’s theological reflection is that he “was strengthened by spiritual enthusiasm because of his pressing desire for martyrdom” (ὁπὸ δὲ προθυμίας πνεύματος ἀναρρωννύμενος διὰ τὴν ἐγκειμένην τῆς μαρτυρίας ἐπιθυμίαν) (5.1.29).
- 60 Vettius Epagathus is another martyr who confesses clearly he is a Christian when the governor asked him (5.1.4). In his answer, however, there is no declaration concerning the cause of the whole community of Christ-followers. A similar picture is reported in 5.1.51 when the governor summoned a certain Alexander, a Phrygian by birth and a doctor by profession, and asked him who he was. He replied: “A Christian.” In both instances, the answers are direct and are not encompassing more than the identity of the respondent. Only in the mouth of Blandina do we hear an apologetic statement on behalf of the whole group.

- 61 Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 22.
- 62 I agree in part with Candida R. Moss when she states, "Blandina's conduct is implicitly contrasted with that of the pagan slaves who had betrayed their Christian masters: the pagan slaves were not tortured and provided a false witness; Blandina was tortured and provided an authentic testimony (*Lyons* 5.1.17)" (*Ibid.*, 113). I prefer not to use the polemical term "pagan" to denote non-Christians, so I will rather use "non-Christian slaves" for those who did not adhere to the religious sentiments of their Christian masters. Also, the language of "false witness" and "authentic testimony" is problematic because it adheres to the rhetorical construction of the text. It is to make a theological value judgment to place Blandina's path to martyrdom as providing "an authentic testimony."
- 63 Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 61.
- 64 See Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).
- 65 Candida Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom*, 114–115.
- 66 The author may be talking about otherworldly concerns or the rearrangement of history, but as critical scholars we need not reproduce the given theological rhetoric in our analysis. Russell T. McCutcheon reminds us that "Despite the fact the people we may study profess to be talking about other-worldly concerns, we as scholars have nothing to study but what we can observe in this world and what we can organize theoretically; therefore, what we observe and study are socially and materially entrenched human beings engaging in certain behaviors, maintaining specific social institutions, and deploying artful rhetorics for this or that material or social end." See Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 88.
- 67 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 152.
- 68 Candida Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom*, 115.
- 69 I am here building upon the reading of Moss, although from a different perspective. See Candida Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom*, 115: "The martyrs are described as being scented with 'the sweet savor of Christ' as they go out to the arena. The multilayered image evokes a handful of rich interpretations. One reading, delicately described by Susan Ashbrook Harvey, draws upon the invocation of bridal imagery in the passage: 'For the first went out rejoicing, glory and grace being blended in their faces, so that even their bonds seemed like beautiful ornaments, as those of a bride adorned with variegated golden fringes; and they were perfumed with the sweet savor of Christ, so that some supposed they had been anointed with earthly ointment' (*Lyons* 5.1.35)." Moss' reading is itself inspired by that of Susan Ashbrook Harvey. See Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*. Transformation of the Classical Heritage 42 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 46–48. The bridal imagery is inspired by Psalm 44:14 (according to the Septuagint); the fragrance of the martyrs is a common topos (cf. e.g. M. Polyc. 15, 2; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 2, 4); cf. also A. Lallemand, "Le parfum des martyrs dans les Actes des martyrs de Lyon et le Martyre de Polycarpe," *Studia Patristica* 16 (Berlin 1985): 156–162.
- 70 The analysis offered here, especially as it relates to Blandina, may be enhanced by exploring the rationale behind such an intellectual experiment. In other words, what would be the social, political and theological motivations of Eusebius for crafting or editing such narrative?

SLAVES IN THE *ACTS OF ANDREW*

This chapter examines how the exercise of “thinking with slaves” may help one understand how sociorhetorics and the process of silencing slaves operate in the *Acts of Andrew*. The focus will be on the female slave Euclia, who served as a surrogate sexual body to her master so that Maximilla, her elite Christian mistress, could enjoy the life of a devoted disciple. I will argue that Euclia’s used, abused, and mutilated slave body served as a canvas on which the author paints various social, political, and theological purposes. I will first consider the *Sitz im Leben* of this particular apocryphal work. Then, I will consider how Euclia’s slave body has been used and abused.¹ Finally, I will demonstrate how noticing slaves as characters in the text and paying attention to gaps and silences might help us in considering the macro-political dimension of the text. I propose that reading the *Acts of Andrew* “from below” may allow one to uncover additional significance or knowledge buried in this text.

7.1 Background

The Greek *Acts of Andrew*, also known as “The Passion of Andrew,” is a section of the *Acts of Andrew* that depicts the events of Andrew’s second visit to Patras and Achaia, leading up to his arrest and his eventual martyrdom.² Hans-Josef Klauck suggests that the *Acts of Andrew* was composed in the first decade of the third century.³ For Dennis R. MacDonald, “the *Acts of Andrew* should probably be dated no later than 200, inasmuch as it influenced the composition of the *Acts of Thomas*.”⁴ Jean-Marc Prieur suggests the writing was completed in the second half of the second century.⁵ Much like the date of authorship, the author of the *Acts of Andrew* is also unknown. He was probably a former philosopher, like Justin Martyr, who discovered the Christian faith and became a “sophisticated Christian Platonist.”⁶ Prieur asserts that the *Acts* were written by “un personnage cultivé, très vraisemblablement par un converti ayant trouvé dans le Christianisme ce que l’on peut appeler la vraie philosophie. Il veut transmettre cette philosophie au plus grand nombre possible d’auditeurs.”⁷

The provenance of the narrative is also disputed among scholars. Prieur suggests Achaia or Egypt, although he seems to favor the latter (Alexandria

in particular, based on the philosophical content of the text).⁸ J. K. Elliott suggests Syria or Egypt as possible locations.⁹ While Jan N. Bremmer proposes Bithynia as the place of composition for the *Acts of Andrew*,¹⁰ MacDonald points to Alexandria as the most likely provenance.¹¹ The *Acts of Andrew* survived in several manuscript fragments (Sinai Gr. 526, tenth-century manuscript; Jerusalem S. Saba 103, twelfth century; Vatican Greek 808, tenth–eleventh century; Papyrus Utrecht I, fourth century);¹² the edited texts we have are modern scholarly reconstructions.¹³ The analysis undertaken therein is based on the reconstruction of Prieur and the translation of MacDonald, which is based primarily on the Jerusalem and Sinai manuscripts.¹⁴ The discussions over the provenance of texts and importance of manuscripts, important as they may be, are not very relevant to the issues this chapter is interested in.

Let us move on to consider how slaves, especially the slave body of Euclia, have been used to advance the narrative.

7.2 The used and abused body of Euclia

The *Acts of Andrew* is replete with slaves both named and unnamed. Before I focus on one named slave (Euclia), who will help me in advancing my argument, I will mention a few slaves to show how they are typically depicted in the narrative.

The first slave one encounters is a “certain boy, a male slave/never considered a real man” (παῖς τις, 2.2),¹⁵ by the name of Alcman, of whom the master Stratocles (brother of the Roman proconsul Aegeates) was very fond. The master, extremely distraught over the state of the “boy” exclaims: “If only I had never come here but had perished at sea this would have never happened to me!” (2.2).¹⁶ This seems to suggest a homoerotic relationship between the master and the slave.¹⁷ The master is assured by Maximilla, his sister-in-law, that he should not worry about his slave because in the city there is a “most god-fearing man” (ἀνὴρ θεοσεβέστατος, 2.5) who can dispel demons and cure people of their sicknesses. When the apostle Andrew appeared on the scene, those who knew him “feared him like some god” (ὥς τινι θεῷ φοβούμενοι, 3.5), while Stratocles’ slaves, who did not know him and thought him to be a poor day-laborer, based on his shabby appearance, tried to beat him. They eventually relented and waited to see what would happen (3.7). After praying and admonishing the crowd for their lack of faith in the true God, judging them to be possessed by a demonic spirit akin to the one that inhabits the sick slave, Andrew was able to expel the tormenting spirit. Thus, the enslaved Alcman was restored to his master so that the master could continue to play with his “boy-toy.”¹⁸

The *Acts of Andrew* fits within the general ideological and top-down perspective that typifies Greek and Roman novels of that time, where “it is hard to find any challenge to the truisms that bandits and pirates are bad, slaves

[turn out to be] deceitful and manipulative, nurses are untrustworthy.”¹⁹ Paying attention to slave characters in the narrative helps us to notice that the author is interested not in the slaves, but in the masters and in the theological aim of persuading others to believe in the deity preached by Andrew the miracle-worker. The narrative focuses attention on the miracle done to heal the slave, and how that miracle inspired belief in those present. The cured slave and his master believed in the deity preached by Andrew and they became close followers of the apostle: “Stratocles was with the apostle night and day and never left him: sometimes examining, learning from, and interrupting him, at other times silent and enjoying himself, having truly become enamored of saving attentiveness. Declaring that he would bid adieu to all his possessions, he decided to live alone, with no one else but the apostle” (8.2).

Andrew becomes a particularly powerful figure with the proconsul’s brother clinging to him night and day. Since the body is a site of power relationships and domination,²⁰ the “ἄνθρωπος θεοσεβέστατος” assumes power through his ability to restore bodies to their proper functions. By healing the body of the slave and restoring it to its function of serving the master’s body, the “most god-fearing man” becomes the feared. Andrew, who was already feared as a god by the slaves who knew about his extraordinary abilities, is placed in a powerful position where both slaves and masters fear him and follow him.²¹ David W. Pao notes correctly,

Not only do the healing stories redefine the identity of the community, they also serve to create a web of power relationships. In emphasizing the spiritual realm in healing miracle stories, the apostle Andrew becomes one who has the power over both the physical and spiritual welfare of the people. In many cases, healing stories became the *rites de passages* through which the subject transfers his or her allegiance to the apostle Andrew. In other cases where one finds competition between Andrew and others, Andrew’s miracles further affirm his role as the one who can provide protection for his followers.²²

The interest of the narrative is in the well-being of the master and in the theological advancement of Andrew, as he is introduced to the household of a powerful slaveholder. The conversions of the proconsul’s brother, alongside that of Maximilla, the proconsul’s wife, grant believers access to the inner chamber of the praetorium to gather and to listen to Andrew in the proconsul’s bedroom. Thus, the sickness of the slave allowed the author of the narrative to introduce Andrew to the scene, and consequently, to display how the movement around Christ managed to occupy the space of power in that specific locale.

There was great joy among the believers as they gathered together night and day at the praetorium with Maximilla. One Sunday, as they gathered in Aegeates’ bedroom listening to Andrew, the proconsul arrived (13.1–2).

Andrew prayed that God would blind Aegeates so that the believers could leave without being noticed. God performed a miracle and the believers were able to leave without being detected by the proconsul. Andrew castigates him like a savage lion armed and ready to attack. The rhetorical force of this line could be interpreted as a castigation of anyone who might oppose this movement of Christ-followers from occupying sites of power to be “savage lion armed to attack us” (13.6).²³ Andrew adds more derogatory remarks about the proconsul during prayer, while Aegeates is asleep in his chambers: “I ask you, my God, Lord Jesus Christ, who knows the future, and I entrust to you my child, worthy Maximilla. May your word and power be mighty in her, and may the spirit that is in her prevail against Aegeates, that insolent and hostile snake ...” (16.1–2).

It is important to consider these scenes in order to fully understand the function the slave Euclia is going to play in the narrative. Having described Aegeates as “a savage lion” (λέοντας ἡγριωμένου, 13.6) and having demonized him as an “insolent and hostile snake” (ὕβριστήν καὶ ἀντίδικον ὄφιν, 16.2),²⁴ the narrative places Andrew, Maximilla, Stratocles, and the other Christ-followers in a different realm, pure and undefiled, whereas Euclia abides in the realm of the “dirty.”²⁵

In order for Maximilla to remain chaste after her conversion,²⁶ and to protect her body from being polluted by sexual intercourse with her husband, she, with the support of the apostle, devised a plan to use the body of one of her slaves. She chose the available and disposable body of Euclia as a substitute. The plan is thus constructed: “She summoned a shapely, notoriously wanton servant-girl named Euclia and told her what she delighted in and desired: “You will have me as a benefactor of all that you require, provided that you go along with my scheme and carry out what I tell you to do” (17.1–2). Notice how the slave is described: παιδίσκην πάνυ εὖμορφον καὶ φύσει ἄτακτον ὑπερβολή, ὀνόματι Εὐκλίαν (a female slave by the name of Euclia, who was shapely in every way and extremely loose by nature, 17.1 [my translation]). Euclia is thus presented through her body as both sensual and lacking self-control. She is constructed as “Other,” representing both “body and desire.”²⁷ Euclia is portrayed as a sexualized object ready to satisfy the lusts of the husband, rhetorically constructed as an impure and savage drunkard. The body of the elite woman is protected, while the body of the slave is exploited.²⁸

In the *Acts of Andrew*, Euclia’s slave body is selected for use, but she is ultimately discarded as dirt so that the dangerous imbalance she represented in the narrative could be restored. The slave body becomes the theological and ideological canvas upon which the demarcations of pure and impure are made manifest. The animalized Aegeates acted upon the servile body of the slave woman in order to allow the enlightened soul of Maximilla to radiate. There cannot be union between those occupying different spheres of reality. Since Maximilla’s body is unpolluted and cannot be contaminated with that

of a savage, Aegeates' lustful passion must be satisfied shamelessly through the body of a slave. Andrew prays that she may be protected from "this disgusting pollution" (τοῦ μίαιρου τούτου μιάσματος, 16.3) so that Maximilla may enjoy intimacy with "her inner husband" (τῷ ἑσῶ ἀνδρὶ, 16:4). Maximilla later confesses to her husband about her love for a spiritual reality: "I am in love, Aegeates. I am in love, and the object of my love is not of this world and therefore is imperceptible to you. Night and day it kindles and enflames me with love for it. You cannot see it for it is difficult to see, and you cannot separate me from it, for that is impossible. Let me have intercourse (προσομιλεῖν) with it and take my rest with it alone" (23.6). Her presence in the bedroom is no longer for the purpose of engaging in sexual intercourse with her husband and the procreation of children. The room is now for spiritual fertility, which includes everyone with faith in Christ. The slave woman can have intimacy with the body of a "savage lion and an insolent and hostile snake"; she has nothing to lose.

The power of the mistress over the slave is exercised through exploitation. Euclia will play the role of a client to her patroness/benefactor Maximilla, who is illustrated as proposing a reasonable bargain to the slave woman. As long as the slave acts according to the scheme and does as she is told, she will benefit from Maximilla's favors. The text does not say anything about what might happen to Euclia if she refuses the powerful woman. Euclia obeys Maximilla's orders and Maximilla "groomed Euclia in her own finery and dispatched her to sleep with Aegeates in her stead. Having used her as his lover, he let her get up and go to her bedroom, as Maximilla used to do. In this way Maximilla escaped detection for some time, and so got some relief, rejoiced in the Lord, and never left Andrew" (17.4–5). In dressing Euclia as herself in hopes that the proconsul would be fooled by such a ruse, the text seems to hope the reader will imagine the two women resemble each other. If Maximilla is also physically beautiful this is not the focus of the text; it is her chastity and the beauty of her soul that are of paramount importance. The mistress, having implemented her scheme, is able to continue to live in peace, unpolluted. With the slave taking her place, she can rejoice in the Lord and stay with the man of God who helped plot her scheme.

The author constructs an argument to silence and kill Euclia when she would not keep silent about the subterfuge. After eight months of playing along with Maximilla's ruse,²⁹ Euclia acted as a clever slave (or *servus callidus*),³⁰ and demanded her freedom from her mistress, which was granted to her that very day (18.2). Euclia demanded more after securing her freedom, including a large sum of money, Maximilla's jewelry, clothing, and fine linen. In spite of Maximilla meeting these demands to keeping Euclia doing her job while remaining quiet about the whole affair, the slave woman could not help but brag about her exploits to the other slaves, "boasting like a show-off" (18.3). Therefore, she had to be silenced.³¹

The textual argument for the eventual demise and violence that will befall Euclia is made by showing her as being disorderly by nature (φύσει ἄτακτον ὑπερβολή, 17.1). Euclia lacked self-control; she was greedy, inconsiderate, sexually permissive, deceitful, manipulative, and shameless. Even her fellow slaves were irritated at her bragging: “She, of course, would mock them when showing them the gifts her mistress had given her; at which Euclia’s fellow servants would acknowledge them, but knew they were at a loss about what to do” (18.5). She even let them observe her while fulfilling her duty of sleeping with the oblivious proconsul and passing for Maximilla.³² “Maximilla no doubt supposed that Euclia was true to her word, and to be trusted because of the gifts given her; and at night she took her rest with Andrew, along with Stratocles and all her fellow believers” (19.1). When the seer Andrew warned Maximilla that something was not working properly in the arrangement, she went into the praetorium and returned to her own bedroom. In the meantime, the irritated slaves who wanted to expose Euclia to the proconsul went into the bedroom to forcibly expose the deceptive slave woman, but they realized that the woman on the bed that night was their mistress. “Some wanted to divulge the ruse and to tell everything to Aegeates; while others, ambivalent toward their mistress, feigned fondness for her and *silenced* the others—even *assaulted* them as though they were *insane*, and sent them away” (ἐπεστόμιζον τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς καὶ τύπτοντες ὡς μεμηνότας διώθουν αὐτοὺς ἐκεῖθεν, 20.5).

In trying to silence the daring slave woman Euclia, other slaves are silenced and beaten in order to protect Maximilla, an ominous portent of what awaits the impudent Euclia. The other slaves are presented as an uncontrollable mob prone to infighting and vying for the favors of the mistress (20:6). Factions developed amongst the slaves as they divided into those who were going to remain loyal to the proconsul by telling him about Maximilla’s subterfuge, and those who were going to guard the mistress’s secrets. Those who advocated on Maximilla’s behalf against their fellow slaves requested compensation. However, they eventually informed Aegeates of what was happening within the household. “Although they solemnly swore themselves to *silence* about what they had seen (Οἱ δὲ καὶ πολλὰ διομοσάμενοι σιγήσειν τὸ ὄφθὲν αὐτοῖς), at the instigation of their father the devil they went to their master immediately, money in hand. They told him the whole story, including how their own fellow servant submitted to the plan Maximilla devised because she no longer wanted to sleep with Aegeates, repulsed by sex with him as a heinous and despicable act” (21.4–5). Upon hearing all the details of Maximilla’s machinations, and how Euclia had bragged about the deception to her fellow slaves, the proconsul discovered the slave’s motivation for himself through interrogation and torture.³³ Euclia confessed to all the payoffs she had received from her mistress for *keeping silence* (ἥτις βασανιζομένη πάντα ὁμολόγησεν ἅπαρὰ τῆς δεσποίνης ἔλαβεν τοῦ σιγῆσαι ἔνεκεν, 22.2).

Euclia is depicted as doubly villainous, for being a whore and for bragging about it, thereby exposing and dishonouring her mistress. The proconsul

discovered the female slave had received payments for her sexual work and blackmailed her mistress with the intent of defamation. The narrator frames the situation in this manner: “The proconsul was furious at her for boasting to her fellow servants and for saying these things to defame her mistress. He wanted the matter hushed up (silenced, *σεσιγήσθαι*), since he was still affectionate for his spouse, so he cut out Euclia’s tongue (*ἐγλωσσοτόμησεν*),³⁴ mutilated her (*ἠκρωτηρίασεν*), and ordered her thrown outside. There she stayed, without food for several days, before she became herself food for the dogs (*κυσὶν βορὰ ἐγένετο*).”³⁵ The remaining three slaves who had told Aegeates the story were crucified (22.3–5) to protect his wife’s honour.

The proconsul, who was usually lethargic and drunk, realized that his household was in disarray and that he no longer had control over what was happening in his household. He could not control his slaves and Maximilla was preoccupied with a new man, obsessed with her new religious devotion. One female slave seemed to have had the upper hand in the chaotic household situation. She was disorderly by nature, and she was about to push the whole household to the brink of total collapse. Aegeates restores this disequilibrium when he, as the *paterfamilias*, takes command of the situation. He puts a stop to the clamor, conflict and chaos by extracting a confession from the ring-leader Euclia. Her slave body is “the site of torture” for “the production of truth.”³⁶ He exiles her from his house, and dogs devour her outside. He takes control of the situation by having other out-of-control slaves crucified. He affirms his masculinity and power over his household. Discipline, firmness, and control are asserted over the factions. He regains control, but only partly; his wife remains out of his grasp. The proconsul grieves over the fact that he appears to be losing his wife to another.

Kate Cooper argues that the plots of the Apocryphal Acts typically center on a contest of masculinity. For Cooper, “The challenge by the apostle to the householder is the urgent message of these narratives, and it is essentially a conflict *between men*. The challenge posed here by Christianity is not really about women, or even about sexual continence, but about authority and the social order. In this way, tales of continence use the narrative momentum of romance, and the enticement of the romantic heroine, to mask a contest between two pretenders to the heroine’s allegiance.”³⁷ Effectively, Maximilla’s devotion to Andrew, and ultimately to Christ, surpasses any sentiments she might have had for Aegeates. The slaves in the text serve as distraction to the real conjugal drama. Maximilla is no longer attached to her husband, but to an “inner husband.” Eventually, Aegeates will lose the battle, and his body will be shattered in a suicidal act. The violence exercised against Euclia’s slave body to extract the truth did not prevent the proconsul from destroying himself, leaving room for Maximilla’s Christian truth. In this text, the body becomes the political field upon which the traumas of the narrative are deployed.

I want to propose that the *Acts of Andrew* is not principally about Andrew, but about Maximilla. The narrative is developed in such a way that places her

at the center of power. Maximilla comes to embody the author's Christian discourse as a means of gaining power.³⁸ The text sets pairs of characters in contested relationships with each other, namely Maximilla/Euclia and Andrew/Aegeates. Euclia is set up in contrast to Maximilla, to enrich Maximilla's function as a major character in the text. To put it simply, Maximilla needed Euclia to make herself look good.

The author of the text needed the slave body to advance his particular theological and ideological agenda. Violence was exercised against the so-called difficult and promiscuous slave Euclia because she threatened the power structure of the household and the outcome of the narrative plan to keep slaves silent and allow an elite Christian woman to enjoy intimacy with Christ, her "inner husband."³⁹ Euclia is constructed as an anti-heroine who brings flavor to the story. Andrew and Aegeates are also set up in opposition to each other, with Maximilla stuck in the middle. Maximilla is devoted to Andrew, not Aegeates, and thus Euclia is used as an object to occupy Aegeates. Once Aegeates discovers the "bedtrick,"⁴⁰ he eliminates Euclia so that he may get back to Maximilla. Maximilla refuses him because her devotion to Andrew/Christ is absolute. Aegeates then eliminates Andrew, hoping Maximilla will have no other choice than to return to him. She refuses him and chooses to live a peaceful and saintly life led by love for Christ and in communion with the brethren (64.10). In spite of Aegeates' supplications and promises to Maximilla that he will make her the owner of all his possessions, he is not able to persuade her. He becomes a weak ("womanish" and "unmanly") character begging a strong and courageous Christian woman who stands fast, even after the death of the beloved Andrew. The text shows how strong the grieving Maximilla was in this way: "After the departure of the blessed apostle, Maximilla, accompanied by Stratocles, completely disregarded those standing around her and came forward. She untied the corpse of the blessed one and, having provided it with the necessary attention, buried it at nightfall" (64.1–2). The text constructs Aegeates as lacking in virtue, bravery, and self-control—one who indulges in violence and drunkenness. By contrast, Maximilla, Andrew and Stratocles show measures of control towards their passions and act as brave/courageous/manly characters.⁴¹ Dejected and heartbroken by the refusal of his wife, Aegeates commits suicide.

The only one remaining in this love affair is Maximilla. She retains her faith, her love for Christ and, in spite of her refusal to accept the material benefits her husband offered to her, she remains the sole beneficiary of her husband's material fortune, receiving his domain. Stratocles, the proconsul's brother, does not want anything to do with his deceased brother's wealth (64.5–7). In the end, Maximilla is the one with the sole authority over her household. Presumably, her religious devotion will become also that of her slaves. Although the text wants to present her as solely interested in the salvation of her soul, her body is preserved and her honour or social status as one from an elite family—even from a higher social class than Aegeates (36.1; 24.1: "her pedigree far

outstripped his”)—is enhanced through the use, abuse, and brutality exercised against a female slave body. In the end, Maximilla is the only powerful, upper-class figure still standing. She is the embodiment of a good Roman (male) citizen who possesses reason, piety, family values, self-control, and control of others.⁴² The narrative then ends with a postscript, in which the narrator prays that his report of the story may have been faithfully transmitted and comprehensible only to the intellect (65.1–2). Through Maximilla, the author’s quest for wealth and power is imaginatively accomplished.

7.3 Silenced slaves

The theme of the silencing of slaves is readily apparent in this narrative. Euclia is silenced; her tongue is cut out; her body is mutilated, and she is cast out to be eaten by dogs. Other slaves who shared the strange happenings in the praetorium with the proconsul are crucified; they are silenced when they dared to speak. Some were paid to be silent, but they paid with their lives when they risked revealing their mistress’s secrets. Euclia’s presence with the proconsul allowed Maximilla’s absence from the conjugal bed, while Euclia’s silence allowed Maximilla’s access to the words of the apostle.

In another instance of the silencing of slaves, Iphidama, a female slave who follows Christ and who is a devoted and faithful confidante of her mistress, Maximilla, never speaks directly to anyone in the narrative—except for a short prayer: “Jesus, I ask you to go in with me to your servant” (28.4). Iphidama is silenced in the narrative, irrespective of her distinct role to her mistress as confidante, messenger, and sister in Christ, and in spite of the numerous references to her name, notwithstanding her role as a constant mouthpiece on behalf of her mistress (2.7; 10.3; 15.1; 25.4; 27.1, 6; 28.1; 29.3, 6; 30.1–4; 32.2).

As with Euclia, Iphidama’s body, as a slave body, was equally exploitable. However, hers had the additional function of a docile body in constant motion to liaise between the apostle and the mistress. Euclia’s slave body was a tool between Aegeates and Maximilla, while Iphidama’s slave body was a useful instrument working dutifully to maintain the relationship between Andrew and Maximilla.⁴³ The beautiful, sensual body of Euclia was fitting for the ungodly Aegeates, while the beautiful soul of Iphidama was used for the salvation of Maximilla’s soul. The wild nature of Euclia led her to her violent death, but the docile nature of Iphidama allowed her to survive. The Christian identity of Iphidama allowed her to partake in God’s domain, although as one whose voice is never heard.

Other slaves mentioned in the text are worthy to be highlighted as well, if only briefly to show how the mechanism of silencing the slaves operates in various ways in the text. The only time we hear the actual voice of these slave characters in the narrative—rather than the background noise they are rhetorically constructed to be—is when one of them suggests that the proconsul

should ask his brother Stratocles about the details of his wife's obsession with a new religious affection. That slave went on to provide some details about the whole situation (24.3; 25.1–9, 26.1).⁴⁴ Curiously, this time the sharing of the information about happenings in the household does not translate into crucifixion for the slave. The power dynamic of this situation is such that the slave speaks while remaining subordinate to the power and control of the master's voice. As he informed the master of what was going on in the household, he spotted Andrew from a distance and shouted out loud: "Look, master! There's the man responsible for the present disruption of your household" (26.2). The entire crowd turned to see the cause of his outburst. Without another word, the slave, eager to please his master, acted as Aegeates' brother rather than his slave (ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτοῦ ἀδελφός, οὐ γὰρ δὴ δοῦλος) and ran from the proconsul, seized Andrew, and forcibly brought him to his master (26.3).

The other reference to a slave is in 32.3, where one finds the description of "a very attractive young male slave who was standing by the open gate" (τινὰ παιδαρίσκον εὖμορφον ἐστῶτα ἠνεωγμένων τῶν θυρῶν [my translation]). There is a textual silence as to why this slave is mentioned and alluded to in this way. The author seems to have an interest in the beauty or sexualized imagery of slaves. Otherwise, why mention that this particular young male slave was extremely good looking, similarly to how Euclia was depicted.⁴⁵

The other reference to possible slave characters is in 52 (2).1–2, in a scene where Andrew is arrested and about to be tied on a cross. As the executioners led Andrew to the place of execution, intending to carry out their orders,

Stratocles, who had learned what was happening, arrived running and saw the executioners violently dragging off the blessed one like a criminal. He did not spare any of them but gave each a beating, ripping their clothing from top to bottom, and tore Andrew away, and told them, "Thank the blessed one for educating me and teaching me to check my violent temper. Otherwise, I would have demonstrated for you what Stratocles and Aegeates the rogue are capable of. For we (believers) have learned to endure our afflictions."

Since slaves were vulnerable to beatings, one can assume that those who were beaten were slaves.⁴⁶ This seems to be a correct assumption considering how Aegeates reacted when they presented themselves to him after this ordeal and explained to him what had happened. His response is simply: "Change your clothes, and go back there to perform your duties. Rid yourselves of the convict's friends, then obey your orders (ποιήσασθε τηνικαῦτα ὑπακούσατε). Avoid as best you can letting Stratocles see you, and don't argue about anything he requires of you (μηδὲ ἀντείπητε εἰ τινοὺς χρήζει ὑμῶν, 53.2–3)." Here again, the slaves are silenced when they speak.

The last reference to slaves is in 56:2, in which Andrew addresses a large crowd composed of “men, women, children, old, slaves, free, and any others who will listen” before he is burned at the stake.

7.4 A Christian philosophy for the masses

The author of the *Acts of Andrew* presents a Christian Odyssey that extols certain heroes not for their physical strengths, but for their faithfulness to God demonstrated by their lives lived in chastity and prayer, in response to the message preached by the messenger Andrew.⁴⁷ This message does not aim to disrupt the normalcy of social situations; slaves will continue to live as slaves and they will continue to be treated as such.

The author presents Andrew’s teaching as that of a pious philosopher. The *Acts of Andrew* is presented as the story of a Greek hero, a sort of divine man who can perform healings and miracles, and who consents to die as an honourable, although provocative and courageous, philosopher akin to Socrates. The Christian philosopher showed his audience how his message was not altogether incompatible with the best existing philosophies, although the Christian philosophy he was presenting is deemed to have superseded the existing ones. Unlike other philosophies directed at highly educated philosophical minds, anyone could access the transforming word and value of this new philosophy. The crowd of bypassing observers in the city pleads with the proconsul to liberate Andrew, who has been hanged on a tree for days and who was hungry. They promise that if he does bring the man down they will all become philosophers (59.13). The acceptance of the Christian message, the author insinuates, will eventually transform the population into law-abiding inhabitants of the city (59.13). Such Christian philosophy (a combination of Middle Platonic philosophical concepts and Christian theological understandings), is presented as superior to any other philosophies which the author considers to be “hollow, destitute, worthless, promising nothing essential, and pledging nothing useful” (7.8–9).⁴⁸ Thus, the crowd appeals to Aegeates to have mercy upon the just man, so that the entire city will in turn receive mercy. The rhetorical argument is that Andrew’s preaching (that is, the Christian’s message) does not intend to create unrest in the empire, but rather encourages everyone to be law-abiding citizens.⁴⁹

Receiving the Christian message means receiving God’s message, and this message is not completely incompatible with the message of other just philosophers, nor is it antagonistic to the just and ethical values of the empire. The slaves who believe in Christ should find consolation in knowing that they are “deemed worthy of the Lord’s seal” (10.3). All the believers in Christ are assured that if they “keep this seal’s impression unconfused with other seals that imprint different designs,” God will commend them and receive them into his domain (εἰς τὰ αὐτοῦ δέζεται, 11.1). If they keep themselves pure according to God’s mysterious seal, then a radiant image appears in their

souls, setting loose their bodies (11.2). This theological address, which is aimed at all the believers (free and slaves), does not factor in the reality that slaves do not have control over their own bodies. For instance, they were not immune to being violated sexually. Even if they wanted to practice abstinence, they could not keep their bodies from being sexually violated, beaten, and subjected to all sorts of abuse. We see this when the Christian *materfamilias*, Maximilla, kept her soul radiant at the expense of Euclia's body. The narrative relies on the slave body of a woman to facilitate the salvation of the soul of an upper-class free woman. As Foucault states, "It is always the body that is at issue."⁵⁰

In the *Acts of Andrew*, the slaves are silenced. Their bodies are utilized as channels through which Andrew and Christ are elevated. The sickly and dead bodies of the slaves serve as canvases upon which particular theologies, ideologies, and power relations are developed. They are bodies that are exploited, beaten, tortured, crucified, and cast out to be devoured by dogs. They are shameful objects that need to be forced into submission.⁵¹ They are the docile and abused bodies that serve the author's Christian philosophy to create radiant souls.

7.5 The dream of empire

The *Acts of Andrew* is the product of an anonymous Christian intellectual dreamer living in one of the Greek-speaking *oikoumene*. If it should be dated no later than 200–220 C.E., then we may situate the functions the slaves play in the macro dimension of the narrative.

From the beginning of the text, one may sense a profound desire on the part of the author to place his Christian protagonists at the center of power. The proconsul's brother as well as the proconsul's wife attach themselves to Andrew. Meetings take place in the inner chamber of the praetorium. The proconsul is manipulated and misled through the machinations of his wife. At the end of the narrative, his body is broken when he commits suicide: "One night, undetected by anyone in his household, he threw himself from a great height and died" (64.6). The text avoids any suggestion that the political void created by Aegeates' sudden death would push the Christian Stratocles to take charge of the political power at the death of his brother: "Stratocles, Aegeates's natural brother, would not so much as touch the property Aegeates left. (The wretch had died childless.) He said, 'May your possessions go with you, Aegeates! May Jesus be my friend and I his!'" (64.7–8). This line may be interpreted as a suggestion that Christians are not interested in the material possessions of those in power since Jesus' friendship satisfies all political aspirations they may have. The political subtext of the *Acts of Andrew* seems to be that the subjects who accept the Christian philosophy will behave as law-abiding citizens, whereas those who oppose the advance of the Christian way will fall from the height of their power. Those in power who do not

accept the new philosophy are hurting themselves. The slaves who help in the spreading of the movement will be compensated and a radiant light may appear in their souls, but they are always at risk to answer any *faux pas* with their bodies.

The slave character Euclia may be demonstrative of how the author imagines the place of slaves within a Christian empire, an empire that is incrementally dislodging and destabilizing the incumbent one. The author constructs Euclia as beautiful, sensuous, sexually inviting, and made available to Aegeates. Yet, she is also presented as “Other”; a vile, shameless, and threatening slave who had to be eliminated because of the threat she represented to her mistress’s goals. Euclia was both an object of envy and a despised slave/object presented as loose, intemperate, insatiable, and mercenary.⁵² The sensual and dangerous Euclia deserved to be silenced, because she spoke when she should not have. Maximilla has no ethical obligations in the slave woman’s death since Euclia herself desired to have sex with the proconsul. In other words, she was complicit in her own commodification, thus absolving her mistress of all guilt.

The author imagines the Roman Empire being taken over by the message of the followers of King Jesus, whose message is about a different empire that is not concerned about the nitty-gritty of social realities here and now, but rather, about the goodness of the souls in God’s domain. Aegeates (the empire’s representative) is portrayed as having a beastly soul (τὴν θηριώδη αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν) and living a lawless public life (πολιτείαν ἄνομον, 64.3). He is depicted as being angry with Euclia, not so much because she tricked him—which she did in her capacity as a female slave obeying the order of her mistress—but for boasting about what she was doing and in acting thus, thereby bringing shame and disgrace to her mistress. The empire punishes slaves who try to dishonour their masters and mistresses; slaves need to obey anyone who commands them to do their duties. Through its representative, the empire is shown as being corrupt and vile. The empire in its current chaotic form is passing away. The Christians are gradually occupying the inner spaces of the political circles, as they are ushering in a new social order/a new creation. Maximilla is mother Eve reimagined and recalibrated,⁵³ who brings new life to this new world. In this reading, Aegeates symbolizes the termination of the old order while Maximilla represents the embodiment and the inauguration of the new. The new order, new creation, and new philosophy is similar to the old, but distinct. The crowd in the *Acts of Andrew* (composed of “men, women, children, old, slaves, free, and any others who will listen,” 56.2) is unlike the crowd in the gospels (composed presumably of men, women, children, the elderly, slaves, free, and any others). The crowd in the gospels would not listen to Jesus, but heeded crooked Jewish leaders and asked for the liberation of a criminal. In contrast, the crowd in the *Acts of Andrew* is able to recognize an innocent figure such as Andrew and does not accept the lawlessness of some political leaders. They cry out for dignified and self-controlled leadership and want to become philosophers as well. The people

want the Christian discourse. *Vox populi, vox Dei!* Through this philosophy, ordinary men and women can become heroes too, just as the blessed Andrew who followed Jesus and became a hero-martyr like him.⁵⁴ The author of the *Acts of Andrew* wants to convince the readers/hearers that Maximilla has no interest in worldly political affairs when he states, “Even though Aegeates often appealed to her and offered her the opportunity to manage his affairs (τῶν πραγμάτων αὐτοῦ δεσπόζειν αὐτήν) he was not able to persuade her” (64.5). However, in spite of the authorial insistence that she was not persuaded to run the estate of the proconsul, in the end, she becomes the new ruler, the mother of a new world order.

The *Acts of Andrew* constructs a Christian discourse that presents itself as good for the body politic of cities in the Roman world, but it is a particular discourse built on the tortured bodies of slaves, who would have to play their normalized roles of mere toys in the hands of elite members of Christian groups. The text constructs a body-soul dualism whereas the salvation of the souls of particular elite members of society, who could afford through various means to live a life of sexual purity, is achieved by the exploitation of slave bodies.⁵⁵ It is an empire for all, but it is the intellectuals, who devise its myth-making or social construction, political machinations, and theological visions.

The author of the account has no intrinsic interest in slaves, except to have them acting and/or speaking out of place—if they are not altogether silenced—in such a way that the narrative can move forward. The healing of Alcman served to introduce Stratocles to Andrew (2–4). The introduction of the slave woman Euclia was to allow Maximilla the freedom to be with the apostle and be taught by him (17–22).⁵⁶ The narrative also shows faithful slaves who obey and are zealous to please the masters. Iphidama is a “good” slave, as is the slave who acted out-of-place like a brother to Aegeates by pointing out the man responsible for the disruption of the master’s household. That slave seized Andrew violently and forcibly brought him to Aegeates (26.3). That incident allowed the narrative to enter into a phase that will lead to Andrew’s numerous discourses and his eventual martyrdom.

The author’s rhetoric of power and vilification of the “Other” advances Roman ways of exercising power and colludes with Roman imperialist thinking. The author’s text was written to be consumed by free members of his social world, those who would not care about the normalization of violence exercised on slave bodies, but who would pay attention to the author’s philosophical propositions. One may have to read the text “from below” in order to discover other elements in the narrative that might show the vital roles minor slave characters play in it.

7.6 Reading the *Acts of Andrew* “from below”

In the *Acts of Andrew* the theological/ideological program proposed to the hearers/readers is the creation of an alternative social world, which would

consist of people from various social classes, viewed as philosophers of a different kind of philosophy. The author's symbolic universe would become manifest through the emphasis on the ascetic life and on the promotion of the care of the soul. This ideal, however, is thwarted by the composition of the social makeup of his world. Only certain members of society can live this idealized life. In the author's rhetorical argument, it may be necessary to conceive of slaves as objects to be used for the realization of such grand utopian vision.

I will now engage briefly with a proposal on readers and reading the *Acts of Andrew* that Laura S. Nasrallah presented.⁵⁷ I am particularly interested in the conclusion of her essay, *Readers and Reading*. She begins her conclusion



Figure 7.1 This fresco appears to show a banquet scene. Slightly in front of the table, but to the right of the fresco, stands a slave figure smaller than the other figures, possibly because he is being shown in hieratic scale as of lesser importance than the others. The Latin inscription on the wall reads: FACITIS VOBIS SUAVITER EGO CANTO EST ITA VALEA: "You are having a good time. I am singing. It is thus a game of dice."

© Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY. Description: People eating and drinking. Banquet scene. Roman fresco from Pompeii. First C.E. Location: Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy.

by approvingly quoting Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader* to show the necessity for a reader to "share certain codes with the author" in order to understand a particular text.⁵⁸ Otherwise, according to Nasrallah, "a misreading may occur, a misreading that may be interesting but that nevertheless manages at best to generate an entirely different text."⁵⁹ In other words, a reader must read texts from the particular literary and social contexts of a text and may not impose his or her own and different ideological context into it. This way of reading may in itself be interesting and may reveal stimulating areas of understanding other contexts, but it does not evaluate the text in its own situation (political, sociological, textual). Nasrallah continues to remind the reader to "differentiate between the actual author and the inscribed author—the author as he or she constructs him or herself in the text."⁶⁰ This corresponds to Eco's understanding of the author as "a textual strategy establishing semantic correlations and activating the Model Reader," especially in the most extreme form of "open texts," in which "the role of its addressee (the reader, in the case of verbal texts) has ... been envisaged at the moment of its generation *qua* text."⁶¹

In relation to the *Acts of Andrew*, Nasrallah notes that "the model reader is constructed as a disciple," as someone who is "convinced by what was said" and who then engages in fellowship with others who are like-minded. These are hearers or readers who understand that which is obvious and "also the obscure, comprehensive only to the intellect."⁶² Thus, the rhetorical argument of the text is to make disciples who are convinced by the message articulated in the *Acts* and are willing to interpret the message from the theological vantage point of the author. The "model reader" is constructed as a disciple who understands the message; one who is willing to participate in community with Andrew and be in communion with those who accept Andrew's message. Nasrallah advances, "An Andrean community is constructed within the text and reconstructed in the proper reading of the text."⁶³ One may question, however, what that "proper reading" might entail, especially if one is engaged in reading the text "from below," that is, approaching the text as a reader who notices and highlights those at the margins of the text and pays close attention to slaves as characters in the text. Having read the text, are we disciples? That is the question Nasrallah asks.⁶⁴ The text itself, she clarifies, "cannot completely guard against an 'aberrant' reading."⁶⁵ Moreover, "These aberrant readings are only aberrant insofar as the inscribed author is concerned, and they may in fact be extremely generative for the text itself."⁶⁶ Here I agree with her assertion that these so-called "aberrant readings" can in fact be proceeded from reading the text itself, albeit from a different angle from that which the inscribed author would want the "model reader" to focus on and to analyze. Nasrallah suggests an area of exploration which buttresses my own line of enquiry and interest when she states: "In its allusion to certain historical and social situations, it [the text] may inscribe within itself *a reading against the grain*, either through *its silences* or through the interstices of the

text—perhaps overly complex syntax, or the force of an argument, or the choice of one term and the avoidance of another.”⁶⁷

The *Acts of Andrew* does not seem to “inscribe within itself a reading against the grain.” One may, however, engage in such reading by highlighting the silences of the text alongside the complexities of the author’s idealized and ideological propositions. It is also possible to tease out the possibility of the author’s anxiety about the perception, reception and transmission of his theological and ideological program. Reading the *Acts of Andrew* against the grain may signify resisting the model reader and model community the author is proposing. If the invitation to discipleship implies that one may use and abuse the body of slaves in order to gain the intellectual and physical freedom that allows one to follow the apostle and have communion with him, then one may resist such an invitation to discipleship. If to be a disciple means to silence others, then a reader may choose to be an “aberrant” reader and give voice to the voiceless. Nasrallah concludes with these words, worth quoting at length:

If the strategies of the author have succeeded, the reader has been transformed by the salvific and autonomous words, has understood the words as they themselves would want, and has become “what the words signified.” If that is the case, the reader participates in an ongoing project, as the author has set forth: with the proper understanding and enacting the *logoi*, the community of Andrew—or the community of those who follow the *logoi* that Andrew strives to make clear—expands indefinitely.⁶⁸

The other possibility is to consider a reader who is not convinced by Andrew’s words. Thus, the author’s theological, social, ideological, and political strategies are resisted and countered. If we are to think with the slaves, the words of the apostle are at best problematic, and at worst hypocritical. The salvation of souls, the sanctity, and the integrity of elite bodies of society are gained at the expense of the vulnerability, the indignity, and the slave’s lack of corporal integrity. Power is imagined through theological and rhetorical modes of persuasion. In this sense, “what the words signified,” to use Nasrallah’s chapter title, is to manufacture a community that does not consider alternatives.

The reader who embraces Andrew’s message may well participate in an ongoing project; one that does not give voice to dissent. Those who are against this community are demonized and projected as falling out of power. If the proper understanding of the author’s project is to follow Andrew’s *logoi*, then the reader who resists may want to consider other *logoi* and different communities where body and soul are not placed in dichotomy. The body of Maximilla mattered, but so did the bodies of the slaves. If the proper understanding and enactment of Andrew’s *logoi*

presupposes indefinitely expanding communities like the one(s) Andrew is imagining, then a reader who reads against the grain may want to expose the problematic aspect of such communities. It is possible for an “aberrant” reader to propose other models of community where concern is expressed for all, regardless of whether they are elite members of society or enslaved persons. As readers reading the *Acts of Andrew* in our context, we may suggest the possibility of a different world with less violence and more justice for all.

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on slaves in the *Acts of Andrew*. The author uses the slaves as characters not only to advance the flow of the narrative, but also to develop his ideological and theological myth-makings. Although the bulk of my analysis centers on the surrogate body of the slave woman Euclia, the other slaves in the narrative were also important to advancing my understanding of this text. Their presence, actions, and clamors disrupt proper decorum. In the shadows, they appear as menacing and conniving, acting and speaking out of place or completely silenced. They are divided between competing groups, vying for the attention of masters out of personal interest. They are portrayed as the ultimate Others who can be ruled peacefully if they become believers in Christ, and eschew the evil path of one like Euclia.

Euclia is portrayed as both body and desire. She is constructed as being in proximity and as a dangerous enemy. The violence inflicted upon her body signifies the will of the power in place to silence her completely. Her tongue is cut, her body mutilated; she is thrown outside and devoured by dogs. She occupies the axis of evil alongside Aegeates, the snake. On the other side of the divide is the mistress Maximilla. Through Maximilla, the Christian message comes to the inner chamber of the praetorian. Maximilla’s love for Christ does not allow her to have a sexual relationship with her filthy husband any longer; her love for Christ requires her to use her slave Euclia as a substitute sexual partner. Gradually in the narrative, Maximilla is transformed from a simple lover of Christ into one who is addressed as a man. She is obeyed by her slaves and demonstrates self-control. Her force is calm, and her demeanor dignified. At the end of the narrative, she is the victorious one left standing.

In some regard, dead bodies allow her to take her place as the new Eve, mother of a new social order. She was in love with her “inner husband” who died and now lives within her. Andrew, who gave her the message and birthed salvation in her, is crucified as a martyr. She was courageous to take his body and give him a proper burial. Aegeates, her despised husband, threw himself off a cliff and died without honour. Stratocles also died, not physically, but to himself and his social status, although he still struggled to refrain from subjecting slaves to violence. The dead bodies of the slaves do not have value in

the narrative. Euclia's slave body is dismembered to preserve Maximilla's reputation. Other slaves who would not keep silence about the chaos going on within the household are beaten and crucified. At the end of the narrative, Maximilla stands as the sole possessor of everything. She has power, her household is filled with faithful and obedient slaves, and she has her Christian faith.

If what I have proposed as the macro-dimension of the text is true, that the author is contemplating a new Christian social order with an ambiguous "woman" as the ruler, then the text becomes a scary one. Imperial Christianity seems to have developed some very important points found in the *Acts of Andrew*, namely how to use and abuse some bodies for the benefits of some souls, and how the mutilation of some bodies may help to bring some enlightened souls to life. The *Acts of Andrew* proposes some worthy philosophical ways to live a life that is pleasing to God, expressed through a devotion to and imitation of Jesus Christ, martyred in the likeness of a slave. In spite of this, however, the new Christian philosophy retains within itself some troubling seeds that facilitate and encourage the abuse and death of the most vulnerable.

Notes

- 1 Foucault states perceptively, "It is always the body that is at issue—the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission ... The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (translated from the French by Alan Sheridan; New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 25.
- 2 The section of the narrative about Andrew's martyrdom circulated separately from other accounts and existed in several adaptations. The oldest testimony we possess concerning the *Acts of Andrew* is found in Eusebius. In his *HE* 3.25.6, he mentions the Acts of the Apostles by Andrew and John and others, which he considers heretical based on the criterion that "no one of those writers in the ecclesiastical succession has condescended to make any mention in his works; and indeed, the character of the style itself is very different from that of the apostles, and the sentiments, and the purport of those things that are advanced in them, deviating as far as possible from sound orthodoxy, evidently proves they are the fictions of heretical men." See *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (trans. and introduction by Christian F. Cruse; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 111. Andrew's apostolic activities "seem to have been known from at least the fourth century onwards by fathers of the church, and by the time of Gregory of Tours the Byzantine tradition concerning Andrew was well established." See J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M.R. James* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 236. The rare allusion to the *Acts of Andrew* in the patristic corpus is in Evodius of Uzala (d. 424 C.E.) in his work *De Fide Contra Manichaeos* 38 (ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25.2; Vienna, Prague, Leipzig, 1892), 968–969. The following statement shows Evodius knew not only of the work, but the excerpt also

- gives a hint as to why it may have been considered unorthodox in some ecclesiastical circles: "Observe in the Acts of Leucius which he wrote under the name of the apostles, what number of things you accept about Maximilla the wife of Egetes: who, refusing to pay her due to her husband (though the apostle had said 'Let the husband pay the due to the wife and likewise the wife to the husband' 1 Cor.7.3), imposed her maid Euclia upon her husband, decking her out, as it is there written, with wicked enticements and paintings, as substituted her as deputy for herself at night, so that he in ignorance used her as his wife." See J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 232.
- 3 Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 116.
 - 4 See D. R. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 2005), 9. In passing, one may note the interesting place of Jesus in the *Acts of Thomas*. The narrative portrays Jesus as selling his freeborn twin brother into slavery for furthering his mission. Becoming a slave, in this sense, is in line with the Pauline image of Christ's emptying himself, taking on a slave-form, for the sake of redeeming humanity. *Acts of Thomas* 1.2: "I, Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter, acknowledge that I have sold my slave, Judas by name, unto thee Abbanes, a merchant of Gundaphorus, king of the Indians. And when the deed was finished, the Saviour took Judas Thomas and led him away to Abbanes the merchant, and when Abbanes saw him he said unto him: Is this thy master? And the apostle said: Yea, he is my Lord. And he said: I have bought thee of him. And thy apostle held his peace."
 - 5 J.-M. Prieur, *Acta Andreae: Praefatio-Commentarius* (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1989), 2:414. The Greek text upon which the *Acts of Andrew* is based was probably written around the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, which places the *Acts of Andrew* between 200–220 C.E.
 - 6 MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew*, 50. On the relationship between the *Acts of Andrew* and Middle Platonism, see in particular Manfred Hornschuh, "Acts of Andrew," *NTApoc* 2:392–395.
 - 7 J.-M. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 2:381.
 - 8 Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 2:416.
 - 9 J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 235.
 - 10 J. N. Bremmer, "The Apocryphal Acts: Author, Place, Time and Readership," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha, 6 (ed., Jan N. Bremmer; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 159.
 - 11 MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew*, 59.
 - 12 J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 232–233.
 - 13 Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 2:431–435.
 - 14 Lautaro R. Lanzillota criticizes the reconstructions upon which most modern study and translations are based. For him, the manuscripts should be studied separately "due to their different provenance, time of composition, intention and character." See Lautaro R. Lanzillota, *Acta Andreae Apocrypha: A New Perspective on the Nature, Intention and Significance of the Primitive Texts* (Genève: Patrick Crameur Éditeur, 2007), xiv.
 - 15 My translation.
 - 16 Translation, Dennis R. MacDonald, 77.
 - 17 See Christy Cobb, "Madly in love: The Motif of Lovesickness in the Acts of Andrew," in *Reading and teaching ancient fiction: Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman narratives*. Writings from the Greco-Roman world supplement series, 11 (eds., Sara Raup Johnson, Rubén R. Dupertuis and Chris Shea; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 29–41. In this chapter, she argues that there is homoeroticism present

- in the text, not only in the Alcman/Stratocles relationship, but also in the Andrew/Stratocles relationship. I thank the author for sharing her work with me.
- 18 The relationship between Stratocles and Alcman seems to exist no longer after the healing of the slave, as Stratocles turns his love and devotion as a disciple to the apostle/teacher Andrew. On homoerotic relationships in antiquity, see Thomas K. Hubbard, ed., *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome. A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Maud W. Gleason remarks correctly, "In antiquity ... what mattered, what defined one's place in the sexual scheme of things, was not the sex of one's partners but their social status. It was generally considered acceptable for a man of high status to have sex with persons of lower status, male or female, as long as he maintained the dominant, insertive role. Sex was about power. To have one's will with one's slaves was unremarkable." See Maud W. Gleason, "Elite Male Identity in the Roman Empire," in *Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire* (eds., D. S. Potter and D. J. Mattingly; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 76.
 - 19 See Tim Whitmarsh, "Class," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* (ed., idem; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 85. Most nurses were slaves or freed women, who maintained a client-patron relationship with their former masters and mistresses. See Sandra R. Joshel, "Nurturing the Master's Child: Slavery and the Roman Child-Nurse," *Signs* 12 (1986): 3–22.
 - 20 The way we may understand the body as a site of power is to pay attention to the web of power relations between individuals, which are determined and affected by particular discourses and performances. Michel Foucault refers to the "technology of power over the body" to articulate this relationship. *Discipline & Punish*, 29.
 - 21 Power is thus created through a particular network, that is, deriving from specific relationships and discourses. See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977* (ed., Colin Gordon; New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 89–102.
 - 22 David W. Pao, "Physical and Spiritual Restoration: The Role of Healing Miracles in the Acts of Andrew," in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (eds., François Bovon, Ann G. Brock and Christopher R. Matthews; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 277. *Italics original.*
 - 23 The exercise of demonizing others in the earliest developments of this religious movement was sometimes expressed as an intramural activity of delimitating similar groups of believers in Christ, whereas other times, the positional strategy is accomplished through rhetoric of vituperation pointed at others (for example, pagans, Jewish nonbelievers, and other groups considered "Other"). See Sean Freyne, "Vilifying the Other & Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (eds., Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1988), 117–143. On the intersectionality of self-definition, religious identity, violence and sexuality with regard to Christianity in the late Greco-Roman world see Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
 - 24 See Monika Pesthy, "Aegeates, the Devil in Person," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 47–55. Nonbelievers share a kinship relationship with the snake (οφεως συγγενης, 47.9).
 - 25 The construction of the "Other" is built on the oppositional notions of "in, us, pure, rational" versus "out, them, polluted, irrational." See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Methuen, 1984). Mary Douglas focuses on matter out of place to examine the

social binaries of impurity/purity, taboo/socially and ritually permitted. Her analysis offers indications and indices into how a particular society may divide and structure itself regarding what the expected social boundaries and margins are. The pollutants and/or the contagious elements are carefully discarded so that they may not create imbalance or threaten the proper functioning of the social order. Mary Douglas reminds us that “any structure ... is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its especially vulnerable points.” Ibid., 115, 121. Douglas has argued that a societal identity/integrity is symbolized as a body sensitive to fissures, bleeding, and infection. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 103–124. Judith Butler offers a post-structuralist critique of Douglas’ cultural coherence established through coherent bodies: “Mary Douglas’s Purity and Danger suggests that the very contours of ‘the body’ are established through markings that seek to establish specific codes of cultural coherence. Any discourse that establishes the boundaries of the body serves the purpose of instating and naturalizing certain taboos regarding the appropriate limits, postures, and modes of exchange that define what it is that constitutes bodies (...) A post-structuralist appropriation of her view might well understand the boundaries of the body as the limits of the socially hegemonic.” Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 178–179. In her analysis, Butler wants to exceed the biological. Her purpose is to move beyond some rigid categorizations of bodies in order to embrace bodies in their malleability. For the case I am interested in, both Douglas and Butler are right. Bodies, in general, are not fixed; questioning and problematizing gender’s fixedness is correct. However, some bodies, such as the female slave body of Euclia, are constructed as Other/bound/fixed to establish boundaries of pure and evil.

- 26 On the role of chastity in the Apocryphal Acts see Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts* (Studies in Women and Religion 23; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1987); eadem, “Mimicking Virgins: Colonial Ambivalence and the Ancient Romance,” *Arethusa* 38 (2005): 49–88. Jennifer Glancy rightly notes, “The branch of Christianity that produced the *Acts of Andrew* was unusual in its wholesale condemnation of sexual activity, even within marriage. The story should not be taken as a historically accurate account of a typical Christian woman (or even a historically accurate account of an atypical Christian woman). The author of the account, however, accepted without protest the sexual exploitation of a slave, an exploitation that occurred precisely to preserve the interests of an elite woman.” Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 67. The issue of Maximilla’s chastity is problematic, at least from the angle of considering her close relationship with Andrew. She spends days and nights with Andrew and prays that God would keep her pure and chaste (καθαρὰν καὶ σώφρονα) so she may give service to God only (σοὶ τῷ θεῷ μου ὑπηρετοῦσαν μόνω, 14.7). Saundra Schwartz highlights some of the erotic elements present in the relationship between Maximilla and Andrew, especially in the scene where Maximilla takes Andrew into her bedroom. She writes, “Maximilla’s gesture, with its hand-holding and attendant entry into a bedroom, resonates with the entry of the bride and groom to the nuptial chamber or, given the absence of a man of the house, the entrance of an adulterous couple into the husband’s bedroom, a scenario fraught with resonance in the popular culture of the Mediterranean world.” See Schwartz, “From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene and the Acts of Andrew,” in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (eds., Todd C. Penner and Caroline V. Stichele; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 305.
- 27 Roberta Stewart, in her analysis of Plautus’ play *Mercator*, presents the merchant’s judgment regarding the slave woman in a similar way to Euclia’s presentation:

- “Beautiful slave women naturally and necessarily function only for illicit sex, and they naturally and necessarily evoke desire in freeborn men, both young and old. The slave woman is body and desire (...) *Mercator* shows the female slave instrumentalized as body in the service of male master.” See Roberta Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery* (Malden, MA; Oxford; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 36.
- 28 Jennifer A. Glancy has shown how the ideology of ancient slavery permeates the narrative of the *Acts of Andrew* and how this particular text supports the hubris exercised against slave bodies. She states, “*The Acts of Andrew* condemns the hubris of a slave who overestimates the significance of a sexual relationship with her owner but does not condemn the sexual use of slaves, especially since that practice permits an elite Christian Woman to remain unsullied by sexual contact. The work exempts Maximilla from a blame in the subterfuge, implying that Euclia’s actions were completely explicable in the context of her nature, which is depicted as both lascivious and greedy.” Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 67.
- 29 The timing of eight months is strange and curious. How the mistress would have gone missing from her sexual conjugal duty for all these months without the suspicion of the husband is not entirely clear. However, as several commentators noticed, this timing may suggest that Euclia is by then pregnant and close to giving birth. At that point, it would have been no longer possible for her to hide it, and thus be discovered by the proconsul. Sandra Schwartz suggests that the author probably introduced this detail in the narrative to give more credence to its verisimilitude. It may also be the authorial indication to the reader to come to the conclusion that Euclia was indeed pregnant at this point, as “‘eight months’ was a highly inauspicious time in the beginning of a sexual relationship between a man and a woman. (...) The fact that Euclia demands her freedom as well as money, and that Maximilla gives it to her un-begrudgingly after eight months, offers a tantalizing clue to decoding the narrative’s construction of sexuality, as well as to understanding the subsequent chain of events.” See Schwartz, “From Bedroom to Courtroom,” 305. If Euclia were indeed pregnant, Aegeates’ act of mutilating the body of the one carrying his own child would mean that he would be “deprived of both Platonic forms of immortality—immortality through offspring and immortality of soul.” See Anna R. Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation: Gender and Class in Early Christian Childbearing Discourse* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 191. At the end of the narrative, we learn that Aegeates and Maximilla were childless. Having a child through the slave would have given them offspring, but this child, if indeed Euclia was pregnant, would have been regarded as a bastard and the fruit of a lie. This narrative echoes the Sarah/Hagar drama. In Sarah’s case, however, she is the one who pushed Abraham to have sex with the slave Hagar, whereas in the case of Euclia, Aegeates ignores whether he is having sexual encounters with his slave Euclia, thinking all along he was engaging in sexual intercourse with his wife. In the Sarah/Hagar narrative, the slave and her son are eventually chased away from the house. In the case of Maximilla/Euclia, the slave is brutally mutilated with probably a baby (or more than one) in her womb about ready to come into the world. Jennifer Glancy also makes the connection between the two stories, referring to the story in the *Acts of Andrew* as a “disturbing variant.” She states, “The story of Maximilla and Euclia echoes, in a disturbing way, the story of Sarah and Hagar. Sarah arranged for her husband to have sex with her slave in order to reproduce. Maximilla arranged for her husband to have sex with her slave so that she, Maximilla, could avoid having sex. In both instances, the Christians who relayed these stories were more concerned by the slave’s purported misbehavior

- than the gross sexual exploitation of a female slave by a female slaveholder." Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 67, 68.
- 30 The narrative sets Euclia up as a clever slave/*servus callidus* character and as the object of a joke that aims to entertain the elite audience, usually prone to enjoy jokes about the torture of slaves. See Holt Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch: The *Servus Callidus* and Jokes about Torture," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989): 233–246.
 - 31 Even when a reader might expect to hear Euclia's voice as a character the author silences her. For example, when the other slaves were observing Euclia on bed with the proconsul she "woke him from a deep sleep, she and the fellow slaves looking on heard this: "Maximilla, my lady, why so late?" Euclia said nothing, and the attending slaves left the bedroom without a peep" (18.7).
 - 32 Saundra Schwartz notes correctly, "Aegeates is a picture of oblivion, as if he were spiritually blind to the brethren's emergence out of his own house and into the world (...) Aegeates is thus constructed in the narrative as not only the ultimate bamboozled cuckold, but as the absolute moral antithesis to his brother, the newly converted Christian." Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom," 301.
 - 33 This corresponds to what one reads in the *Digest* of Justinian 48.10.15.41: "By torture we mean the infliction of anguish on the body to elicit the truth." Torturing the slaves to extract truth from them was a common procedure in Greek and Roman trials in antiquity. See E. Peters, *Torture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 11–36.
 - 34 This act, as Christy Cobb observes, suggests Aegeates' "desire to silence her and simultaneously humiliate her." Cobb, "Hidden Truth in the Body of Euclia," 35. The message seems to be, according to Solevåg, "If she had kept her tongue, she would not have lost it." *Birthing Salvation*, 167.
 - 35 Cobb observes rightly that, "Apparently, even after the removal of her tongue and her mutilation she is still alive for several days. This detail serves to punish Euclia further as the reader pictures her dying a slow and degrading death." See Cobb, "Hidden Truth in the Body of Euclia," 35. Anna R. Solevåg points to the connection between Jezebel's violent death, who is depicted as eaten by dogs (2 Kings 9:30–37), and that of Euclia's death. See Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation*, 194. One may also highlight the commonalities of trick, participating in shameful slut behaviors, and being cursed that both narratives advance in their rhetorical arguments. This serves to justify the violent deaths and the eating by dogs of both characters, who are cast as evil "others," deserving of their unhappy fate. It is interesting to note in passing how the author of the Book of Revelation warns the community of Christ-followers in Thyatira by making reference to Jezebel: "You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my slaves (τοὺς ἐμοὺς δοῦλους) to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. Beware, *I am throwing her on a bed*, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; and *I will strike her children dead* (καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ)" (Rev. 2:20–23, NRSV, slightly altered). The lines put in italics echo eerily what happened to Euclia in the *Acts of Andrew*. Maximilla her mistress threw her on the conjugal bed. Aegeates commits adultery with her, albeit unknowingly. He is in distress upon learning what happened; he is losing his wife. However, the violence is exercised upon the abject body of the slave. Euclia is mutilated/cut into pieces and her plausible child/children is/are dead. The female slave is dead so that the work of God can continue to be lived out by and among his people.
 - 36 I am taking these lines from Page duBois when she states, "The slave body has become, in the democratic city, the site of torture and the production of truth."

- Page duBois, *Torture and Truth* (New York/London: Routledge, 1991), 50. DuBois shows that slaves in Athenian democracy were considered mere bodies who thought with their bodies. Only through torture could “truth” be extracted from a slave, although the testimony the slave provided under torture was not always believed as valid. Torture was the marker between the violable and vulnerable body of the slave and the inviolable body of the free. Torture normalizes and naturalizes differences that are complex and contested. The author continues, “The free man is compelled by oaths; he might lose his rights as a citizen if he lied under oath. The slave, even though he will certainly be put to death as a consequence of what he reveals under torture, will nonetheless, under torture, reveal the truth.” Ibid., 61. Building on Page duBois’ work on truth, torture, slavery, and gender Christy Cobb explores how truth in the *Acts of Andrew* “is an active participant, and various characters verify ‘truth’ in different ways, depending on their status, gender, and participation in the Christian community.” See Christy Cobb, “Hidden Truth in the Body of Euclia: Page duBois’ *Torture and Truth* and *Acts of Andrew*,” *Biblical Interpretation* 25 (2017): 20.
- 37 See Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 55 (emphasis original).
 - 38 Here I am thinking of Michel Foucault’s understanding of power as a multi-dimensional force that creates various discursive projects. For Foucault, power can be productive as it can create discourses, pleasures and knowledge. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 29.
 - 39 Hannah Arendt contends that when hegemonic power is in danger violence will occur, but violence cannot take place without a certain basis of power. See H. Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).
 - 40 Schwartz, “From Bedroom to Courtroom,” 304.
 - 41 Solevåg captures the image of Maximilla beautifully: “As a perfect female, with some admirable male traits, then, Maximilla is a paragon of chastity, silence and submission.” Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation*, 187. Maximilla’s silence (or preferably, her few words) is to show self-control and dignity. Andrew addresses her as a wise man (Δεομαί σου οὖν τοῦ φρονίμου ἀνδρός, 41.1), making her, thus, an “honorable” male member.
 - 42 One may also suggest that perhaps she functions as a placeholder for Andrew to assume the mantle of the patriarchal leader.
 - 43 I concur with Solevåg that “The relationship between Maximilla and Iphidama, though cloaked in metaphorical sisterhood, is clearly a slave-mistress relationship where one commands and the other obeys. For example, Maximilla commands Iphidama to fetch Andrew for her: “Sister, go (γενοῦ ἀδελφῆ) to the blessed one so that he may come here to pray and lay his hand on me while Aegeates is sleeping” (15). Iphidama rushes off without delay: “ἡ δὲ μὴ μελλήσασα δρομαία.” Later, Maximilla sends her slave to the prison, to find out how Andrew is doing. Her instruction is again given in imperatives: “go ... and find out (ἄπελθε ... μάθε, 27).” Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation*, 163.
 - 44 This may simply be a narrative device to recapitulate the plot for the reader.
 - 45 This brief mention of that slave resembles Plautus’ staging of the female slave of the *Virgo* in which he invites his elite (male) audience members and prospective buyers to admire a beautiful but sexually vulnerable female slave they could fantasize possessing as a satisfying commodity. The play *Mercator* does the same as well in inviting the male viewers to gaze at/desire, imagine, and bidding for the beautiful female slave they would like to possess. See Roberta Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 36–47.

- 46 Solevåg, in relation to this incident, asks some pointed questions: "Is Stratocles here portrayed as a not yet fully developed Christian, or an upper-class male who is entitled to beat up any slave he pleases? Is the reference to training and learning ironic, i.e. is he disproving by his actions what he claims to have learnt? Or is it thanks to his Christian training that he does not kill the slaves but 'only' beats them up, as an appropriate punishment for their actions?" Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation*, 156–157.
- 47 See Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew*, 14. The *Acts of Andrew* is written in the style of biographies of ancient Greek philosophers. The author's portrait of Andrew resembles the figure of Socrates, especially as presented in Plato's dialogues *Theatetus* and *Phaedo*, as well as Socrates' final discourses in Plato's *Apology*. See Dennis R. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer: The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 301; Richard I. Pervo, "Early Christian Fiction," in *Greek Fiction. The Greek Novel in Context* (eds., J. R. Morgan and Richard Stoneman; London: Routledge, 1994), 244–246.
- 48 See David H. Warren, "The Greek Language of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: A Study in Style," and Evie Zachariades-Holmberg, "Philological Aspects of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, 101–124, 125–142. These studies reveal the philosophical pretensions of the author of the *Acts of Andrew* in the complexities of the language used. The self-conscious attention given to language in the *Acts of Andrew* centers on the contrastive ideological discourse which presents "the speech that changes lives and the 'dullness and unbelief and simplicity' of those who will not hear, as also between the noisy support of the crowd and the silence of the proconsul at Andrew's martyrdom. Andrew, too, delivers a passionate oration from the cross, while the proconsul 'stood there speechless.'" See Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 95, quoted materials from E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. W. Schneemelcher, Eng. trans. R. M. Wilson, 2 vols.; London: Lutterworth, 1963–1965), 2:355, 420–21, 422. Andrew's speeches aim to demonstrate the truth and the reasonableness of the Christian message. The silences are ideological and purposeful as well.
- 49 The text presents Andrew as a very important character, as one who is feared and loved by many as a righteous man (ἄνδρα δίκαιον, 59.15). The narrative indicates how the proconsul, after having had Andrew arrested, faced a grieving and angry crowd for how he treated the apostle and hanged him for four days. In 60.1–2 one reads, "At first Aegeates disregarded the crowd, and gestured for them to leave the tribunal: but they were enraged, and were gaining courage to oppose him in some way. (They numbered about two thousand.) When the proconsul saw them he became crazed, or so it seemed—terrified he might suffer a revolution." Andrew is announcing Christ's message, but he is also presented as a new Jesus. He is, like Jesus, a just and pious man, a miracle-worker, and one who announces God's kingdom. However, unlike the Jesus of the gospels who was thought to be mad, demon possessed, and an enemy of the state, Andrew is viewed by the crowd, who opposed fiercely his arrest, as a rational philosopher and one whose freedom would mean that all in the city of the emperor would be behaving as law-abiding citizens. The *Acts of Andrew* presents a mirror-reading of Pilate and the crowd in the gospels by having the roles reversed. Consider the following table to notice the similarities and contrasts:

Table 7.1

<i>The gospels, Pilate</i>	<i>Acts of Andrew, The Crowd</i>
“Here is your King,” Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your King?” Pilate asked? “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered (John 19:14–15, NIV)	They cried out, “what is this judgment of yours, proconsul? You have judged wickedly, you have made an unjust decision” (59.7)
“What crime has he committed?” (Τι γὰρ κακὸν ἐποίησεν), asked Pilate (Mat. 27:23, NIV). What evil has he done? (ESV), Mark 15:14; Luke 23:4	What crime did the man commit? What evil has he done? (Τι κακὸν ἔπραξε; 59.8)
When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but that instead a riot (θόρυβος) was breaking out (NIV, Mat. 27:24), he took water and washed his hands. The crowd said: If you let this man go, you are not Caesar’s friend (John 19:12, NIV)	The city is in uproar! (ἡ πόλις τεθορύβηται) You are wronging us all. You are grieving us all! Don’t betray the city of the emperor!

Pilate had the authority to conduct assize like a proconsul. He is constructed in the gospels as one who wants to know the truth and release Jesus, whom he finds to be a righteous man. The crowd in the gospels, after Jesus’ arrest, was persuaded by the Jewish leaders to demand that Jesus be executed. In the *Acts of Andrew*, the proconsul takes the place assigned to the crowd in the gospels, while the crowd in the *Acts of Andrew* assumes the role of the Roman governor in the gospels. As the above table indicates, the wordings are similar in both columns. In the first cell on the left, Pilate presents Jesus as the king of the Jews. The crowd corrects him by crying out they have no king but Caesar. The corresponding cell on the right shows that the crowd also cried out and corrected Aegeates, the political authority in place. There is no mention of sole allegiance to Caesar. That particular political loyalty can be inferred in the last cell on the right: “Don’t betray the city of the emperor.” There is no specific correspondence to the statement that “your courts are a sacrilege” in the gospels. However, the reader is invited to conclude that the fate of the innocent Jesus and the liberation of the violent and dangerous political prisoner Barabbas is a travesty of justice. The question in the second cell is identical in both columns. The expected answer to the question is: none. The crowd and the Jewish authority stand morally condemned in the gospels at the crucifixion of Jesus, while the proconsul is judged as a brute tyrant for arresting and hanging Andrew in the Acts. In both stories, there are looming riots at the scene of the impending death of main characters. An uprising was breaking out in the event Pilate would not cede to the crowd’s pressure in the gospels, whereas a revolt was about to happen in the *Acts of Andrew* because of the alleged unfair treatment of the god-fearing Andrew. The betrayal of the emperor is invoked in both narratives to deter the wrong-headed party from entering into a politically dangerous terrain. In the gospels, Pilate granted the crowd what they wanted, but in the *Acts of Andrew* the crowd was left without satisfaction. The political power in the gospels is respected, both by presenting the Romans as not being primarily responsible for the death of a righteous preacher and by Pilate conceding to the demands of the

crowd, lest they riot and thus bring chaos under the governance of a Roman official. In the *Acts of Andrew*, the political landscape is respected by having an unjust Roman proconsul dead and leaving a political vacuum the emperor would have to fill. That, in itself, is politically problematic, but it is not the same as a revolution based on the martyrdom of a man of God.

- 50 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25.
- 51 A slave describes the demeanor of Stratocles the Christian believer to Aegeates his brother in these terms: "Even though he owns many slaves, he appears in public doing his own chores—buying his own vegetables, bread, and other supplies, and carrying them on foot through the center of the city—making himself look a simple object of shame to everyone" (25.9). In other words, his everyday practices become that of an honourless and shameless commoner. Stratocles' *habitus* (a practice that highlights certain behavioral dispositions based on social class in the details of one's food preferences, clothing, and cultural tastes) is shown to have been altered because of his new religious convictions. On "*habitus*" see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (translated by Richard Nice; Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72–95. For Jean-Marc Prieur, "Ceux qui ont reçu les paroles d'André ne tiennent plus compte des différences sociales ... L'acceptation des paroles salutaires a aboli les distinctions sociales." J.-M. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 1:328. One may argue against Prieur that it is too simplistic to assume that social differences no longer count for those who receive Andrew's discourses. It is true the Christian believers meet in the privacy of Maximilla's house, and that Stratocles prefers a simple life in contradistinction to that of a noble Roman citizen. However, Stratocles still felt he could, as an upper-class male, just grab slaves and beat them as he pleases to fix a situation, albeit recognizing he acted in a violent manner in doing so (52.1–2). Contrary to Prieur's mention of Maximilla sharing her clothes and her jewelry with Euclia as a sign of renunciation of fine clothes and beautiful adornments (*Acta Andreae*, 1:328), it is clear what the motive was. She was using the slave body of Euclia. She was not embracing a life of simplicity by the giving of her fine possessions. Moreover, one needs to be careful not to equate certain projected social behaviors from the elite's perspectives to social realities of equality between different social classes. Bourdieu argues, "Even those forms of interaction seemingly most amenable to description in terms of 'intentional transfer in the Other,' such as sympathy, friendship, or love, are dominated (as class homogeneity attests), through the harmony of *habitus*, that is to say, more precisely, the harmony of ethos and tastes—doubtless sensed in the imperceptible cues of body *hexis*—by the objective structure of the relations between social conditions." Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 82.
- 52 Edward W. Said mentions how the "Orient" is viewed by the European Orientalists as both barbaric and seductive. See Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). It is interesting to note that the romance *Joseph and Aseneth*, roughly written around the same period (no later than 200 C.E.), also presents Aseneth as a beautiful woman. She is also constructed as being sexually available to Joseph. Aseneth is also viewed as Other. If there is anything worthy of admiration in Aseneth the Egyptian girl, it must be because she is like us, "as tall as Sarah, as handsome as Rebecca and as beautiful as Rachel" (1:7).
- 53 Andrew's last communication with Maximilla asserts as much: "I rightly see in you Eve repenting and in me Adam converting. For what she suffered through ignorance, you—whose soul I seek—must now redress through conversion. The very thing suffered by the mind which was brought down with her and slipped away from itself, I make right with you, through your recognition that you are being

- raised up. You healed her deficiency by not experiencing the same passions, and I have perfected Adam's imperfection by fleeing to God for refuge. Where Eve disobeyed, you obeyed; what Adam agreed to, I flee from; the things that tripped them up, we have recognized. For it is ordained that each person should correct his or her own fall" (37.9–12). For more on the association between Maximilla and Eve see Solevåg, *Birth of Salvation*, 180–185.
- 54 This particular reflexion I am making is inspired by my reading of Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, but Many* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997). Riley argues that the story of the classical Hero, alongside the ideals and the values of classical antiquity, allowed the Christ story to be accepted by various people, who understood the Christ figure as fulfilling every aspect of the classical Hero. Many of those who followed the Christian message did so with the hope they would themselves become Heroes as well.
- 55 Elizabeth A. Castelli's interesting analysis on the soteriological significance of the soul in tension with, and sometimes over and against, the body in early Christianity is worth quoting at length: "The paradox of early Christianity, of course, is that its apparent rejection of the body as a shadowy and passible shell of the immortal soul is located within an ideological and practical matrix thoroughly focused on the body. Every important dimension of early Christian thought and practice is mediated through language and ideas about and the material realities of the (human or mystical) body." See Castelli, "Mortifying the Body, Curing the Soul: Beyond Ascetic Dualism in the Life of Saint Syncretica," *Differences* 4 (1992): 137. This theological/ideological framework of conceiving salvation for the soul and enslavement for the body is what has guided many slave owners and white missionaries eager to spread the Christian message to the nations during the period of European colonization and American imperialist expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See *Teaching All Nations: Interrogating the Matthean Great Commission* (eds., Mitzi J. Smith and Jayachitra Lalitha; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014). See also Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
- 56 These chapters are filled with drama and violence exercised against the slave bodies. These episodes allow the author to show the reading/hearing audience the trouble slaves can be, at times acting as the enemies within the household. See Albert Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms," in *Early Christian Families in Context. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (eds., David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 232.
- 57 See Laura S. Nasrallah, "'She Became What the Words Signified': The Greek *Acts of Andrew's* Construction of the Reader-Disciple," in *The Apocryphal Acts of The Apostles*, 233–258.
- 58 See Umberto Eco, *The role of the reader: Explorations in the semiotics of texts* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1979). In this watershed exposition, Eco approaches his subject from the angle of the reader and tries to articulate the transaction between reader and text.
- 59 Laura S. Nasrallah, "'She Became What the Words Signified,'" 254.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 255.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 255–256.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 256.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 257.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 257.

- 65 She uses the term “aberrant” in Eco’s sense. Eco, *Role of the Reader*, 8: “In the process of communication, a text is frequently interpreted against the background of codes different from those intended by the author. Some authors do not take into account such a possibility ... Those texts that obsessively aim at arousing a precise response on the part of more or less empirical readers ... are in fact open to any possible ‘aberrant’ decoding.”
- 66 Laura S. Nasrallah, “‘She Became What the Words Signified,’” 257.
- 67 Ibid., 257. Emphasis added.
- 68 Ibid., 258. Here Nasrallah seems to embrace Andrew’s theological project.

CONCLUSIONS

This book demonstrates the value of using the tools and applying the insights of Subaltern studies to the study of ancient slaves in the Pseudepigrapha and in some early Christian texts. My aim was not to explore particular discourses about slavery in antiquity, although an examination of how slaves are depicted in various texts provides some understanding of how slavery as an institution functioned in antiquity. I wanted to *see* slaves as important characters in the texts in order to expose how power functions in the narratives studied. Although the narratives are never about the slaves, who are mostly incidental in the texts, I wanted to read the texts differently by paying attention to silences and gaps in the stories. When doing so, it becomes evident that it is as if the slaves appear with a script of their own. It is as if one is discovering the stories of the subaltern Other through a script “from below.” It is a script that may even go beyond the editorial control of the writers/editors of these narratives, who imagined and rhetorically constructed the slaves as their audiences would have wanted and expected. When one takes the time to *notice* the slaves, one may be surprised to find out that, seemingly, they want to be heard, to be seen, and to matter in these texts not merely as objects, but as human beings. This is what I tried to capture in this monograph.

In this conclusion, I will first provide a summary of each chapter and highlight some of the themes and arguments developed throughout this study. Then I will provide answers to the interesting and important “so what?” question in order to justify the existence of this book.

Chapter 1

I started my analysis with the guidance of a compatriot, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his now classic work *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. I wanted to understand the dynamics of history writing. Some of the questions important to me were: How does one write a history of those who left no writings? How does one go about probing slaves at the cross-section of early Judaism(s) and early Christianities? How does one approach history “from below”? Trouillot’s “four crucial moments”—the making of

sources, the making of *archives*, the making of *narratives*, and the moment of retrospective significance or the making of *history*—helped me to understand more clearly the mechanisms behind the production of history. Trouillot’s “crucial moments” also allowed me to understand why this particular research project on slaves in specific texts may lead one into conflicts with some academics. The problem is a serious one. Why is there no work on slaves in the *Pseudepigrapha*? Why is this monograph the first one devoted entirely to slaves as characters in the texts covered? Trouillot’s work propelled me to situate my work within a different kind of historiography, that of subaltern historiography.

My historiography has been informed not only by the Subaltern Studies collective and its developments, but also by works of M. Foucault, E. Said, and others.¹ Although it may not have been always clear as to how and why Subaltern studies inform some sections of this study, one must realize that even when I do not explicitly mention the rewards of doing subaltern analysis in any given chapter, I have been guided by some of its core principles. Probing buried voices and presence has been a constant methodological concern throughout this project. The tools and insights from Subaltern studies that I have deployed in this study are about paying close attention to people’s experiences of power, domination, oppression, and violence, alongside the vectors of gender and social class. I tried to de-center some grand master narratives by eschewing interest in the major characters, and instead, focusing on minor slave characters in order to learn differently and subversively. I set out to uncover small tales constructed around slaves in order to (re)read various narratives and explore some of the nuances and complexities in them. In other words, I attempted to consider how some narratives could be read and understood differently if the reader pays close attention to the presence of slaves in them.²

Chapter 2

In the second chapter, I primarily immersed myself in the so-called pseudepigraphic materials for two reasons. Firstly, the investigation of these texts as a collection of sources for the history of slavery in antiquity is worthwhile. Secondly, these texts provide social, historical, and literary contexts for the development of some of the rhetoric used in the early Christian texts analyzed.³ Placing these varied texts together and paying serious attention to slaves as characters in them was also a way to go beyond ahistorical demarcations or disciplinary boundaries. The inclusion of the pseudepigraphic materials in this project has allowed me not only to complicate and challenge the distinction between Jewish and early Christian texts, but has also given me the opportunity to extend my analysis to a larger corpus. Focusing on this body of literature does not really allow to modify the larger framework of our understanding of ancient slaves, but rather, it affords me the possibility of discovering some interesting and pertinent connections between the rhetorical

construction of slaves in these texts and the larger literary and historical contexts of their production. I have indicated how the Christian interpolations in some of these pseudepigraphic materials could indicate areas of self-definition and articulation of particular Christian identities.

In the Sibylline Oracles, slaves are portrayed as utterly shameful. It follows that nations that do not fall within the prophet's favor are imagined as inhabited and governed by slaves, brought there by force.

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* reveal anxieties concerning the image of the great hero/patriarch Joseph. The issue of whether Joseph was a slave or not became a central point in the narrative. I argued that it may be plausible to consider this as articulating a particular image and representation of the free male figure. Considering the Christian interpolations in the *Testament of Joseph* and the Christian milieu of such a document in its final form and its influence, the image of a self-controlled hero and free male Joseph may have been a way for some groups to define themselves vis-à-vis others in the early second century C.E. In presenting themselves as belonging to associations constituted of free individuals, as opposed to being members of communities composed of unreliable (slaves and poor) members of society, it is possible to see in this document traces of some Christian groups adapting this text to suit their own purposes of embracing some of the ethos of the Roman Empire.

I was particularly touched by the slave characters in my reading of the *Testament of Job*. By dissecting the portrayal and silencing of the slaves, the reader discovers how showing compassion to excluded voices raises their own humanity. In this document, the unnamed female slave at Job's house was the one who stood between Job and disaster. Contrary to the canonical Job, God is not presented as a character controlling everything from his domain. It is up to the protagonists here on earth to live a just life to the best of their ability. Instead of giving a burned loaf to a stranger begging for bread, as advised by her owner, Job, the female slave did the right thing by offering him her own loaf. The stranger, who was actually Satan in disguise, scorns her for not obeying her master. After obeying Job's command, she disappears from the narrative, bringing the household to ruin. Job's wife, Sitis, becomes a slave begging for bread for her destitute and miserable husband, eventually dying amongst the beasts. Job had learned his lesson; he became a compassionate man, contrary to how he exploited and ignored the poor before his horrible fate.

In the *Letter of Aristeas*, slaves become the means by which power is manifested. Those from Judea taken as captives and reduced to slavery in Egypt conquer the Egyptian king, who prostrates himself several times before the sage-translators of the Hebrew text.

The text of *Jubilees* reflects on the narrative of Noah's curse of Canaan in Genesis 9:25 by revising it slightly. It is unclear why the author would choose to make this small change to the Genesis text with regard to the position of slaves.

In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the dialectical relationship of master and slave is complex. Aseneth becomes Joseph's slave, but remains a mistress to others. The past is recounted with the aim of aggrandizing the otherwise liminal figure of Joseph, while other characters are portrayed as ambiguous and find their existential significance relative to those with whom they are in a relationship.

In the Wisdom Literature (*Ahiqar*, 3 Maccabees, *Pseudo-Phocylides*, and the *Sentences of the Syriac Menander*), slaves are ascribed little value. They function as stock characters for the pedagogical purpose of teaching masters how to be better masters.

The wisdom shared in *Pseudo-Phocylides* concerning the slaves is that they are the possessions of the free masters who need to make sure that their human tools perform well. The emphasis is on the honour of the masters and the interests of the free person. The perspectives of the text and the moral instructions it contains are focused on ensuring that the social distributions remain hierarchically organized.

The same master/ruling class perspective regarding slaves is shown throughout the *Sentences of the Syriac Menander*. The expected attitude on the part of slave owners is to silence and hate evil slaves, as God himself hates them. Overall, the slaves are mostly relegated to their useful functions as mere disposable properties that masters need to control. Anxiety and complexity surround the slave bodies. The wisdom conveyed to masters and free members of society is that one needs to be careful with their life and behaviours to avoid being in the condition of, or associated with, slaves. The theme of the silencing of slaves for the interests of owners is preponderant in the various narratives. The silencing of marginalized characters such as slaves happens not only in these texts but also in current scholarship, which continues to render them invisible by refusing to acknowledge them.

Chapter 3

In the third chapter, I wanted to understand the place of slaves in Paul's writings. This chapter initially focuses on Chloe's people (τῶν Χλόης) in 1 Corinthians 1:11. I wanted to comprehend the happenings in Corinth "from below," that is, by (re)imagining some of the conflicts there from the perspective of social sub-groups. My proposal is that those of, belonging to, or associated with Chloe may have pressured Paul into addressing the slaves' situation directly when they went to see him. Paul offered the slaves some theological consolation, without addressing their social situation in the assemblies. The second focus was on Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25–30. I argued, based on how he was treated as a body in motion to be exchanged or sent back and forth, that Epaphroditus was a (former) slave with attachment to a particular patron or benefactor. I also drew on the psychosomatic dimension of Epaphroditus' acute anxiety to return to those who sent him to suggest that this yearning may be an indication that he found completion or

purpose in rendering service to the community. The third focus was on the slave Onesimus in Philemon. I sought to uncover the meaning of this narrative from Onesimus' perspective. I argued that Paul's rhetorical language in this short and diplomatic letter was an attempt to establish his own hierarchical position. I highlighted Onesimus' silence in order to animate that silence. Onesimus' silence may have great theological significance, although a social/subaltern historian may have to consider the social forces that have perpetrated his silence. Philemon is a very challenging book that contributed to the perpetuation of slavery throughout the centuries. One needs to grapple with this sordid history to find ways to heal the wounds it has caused. The themes of silenced slaves, of anxieties and complexities framing slave bodies, and of narrative development in the interests of those in a superior hierarchical position are evident in the various Pauline narratives analyzed. The silences of the slaves, their anxieties, and their search to know and understand how to express their faith and maintain communion with others may suggest we pay attention to their part in the past and try to understand a counter-narrative of early Christ-groups through them.

Chapter 4

In this chapter on slaves in the gospels, I wanted to (re)imagine/understand anew the place of slaves in this corpus. The gospels describe Jesus as one who associated with social outcasts and with the vulnerable, but they also depict him as one who relied on a normative portrayal of slaves in antiquity to illustrate his teachings. Ancient attitudes towards slaves and their treatment are well illustrated in Jesus' parables. The gospels demonstrate that not only were slaves subject to violence, but also illustrate the stereotypical views of free persons that assume that slaves were inherently untrustworthy and had nefarious motives. This chapter focuses on two slaves, namely the female slave of the high priest, and Malchus, the man whose ear Peter cut off. I have proposed to read the female slave as one character who has been manipulated and morphed from one gospel to the next. I suggested that the editorial manipulations are for the sake of rehabilitating Peter's memory. I also proposed to understand the violence done to Malchus and the different reactions towards this incident as characteristic of early Christ-groups' attempt to articulate different responses vis-à-vis slave bodies. I have suggested a closer link between the female slave and Malchus, and have shown how her questions remain accusatory. She witnessed the act of violence perpetrated on a related fellow slave by one close to Jesus and she is the only clear voice of slaves in all the gospels. Hers is the challenge to the fearful disciple to accept the call and follow his master all the way to the cross. Hers is the cry opposing violence against slave bodies like hers and Malchus'.

The themes that emerge from this chapter are similar to those found in the previous chapters. In the gospels, slaves are presented in their stereotypical

role of mere instruments to satisfy the desires of their masters. Slaves are silenced so that the voices and concerns of other free members of society can be heard and emboldened. One particular female slave who dared confront an important male disciple is progressively silenced with each successive gospel so that Peter's image and memory are enhanced. Violence on slave bodies is present and illustrated not only in Jesus' parables, but also in the treatment of Malchus and the unnamed female slave working at the door of the high priest's courtyard. That female slave, however, may give us hints as to where one could look to find and ascribe meaning to the abused slave bodies. It is in the persistent cry for justice on behalf of the mutilated body of a loved one.

Chapter 5

This chapter is about slaves in the book of Acts. This chapter considers two specific women slaves, one named and associated with a Christ-believing group (Rhoda, the maid slave in Acts 12:15), and the other nameless and lacking association with a Christ-group (the merchants' fortune-telling slave woman in Acts 16:16–18). I have highlighted the violence exercised against these slaves (psychological and economic) and demonstrated how these texts assume the slaves to be vulnerable to such violence. The irony regarding Rhoda is that she alone recognized Peter's voice, yet she is scolded for testifying about the voice she recognizes at the outer door while the followers of Christ were praying for him. Once Peter finally enters the house, Rhoda is no longer necessary to the narrative. The unnamed female slave in Acts 16 has prophetic gifts as well, and her message conforms to what the missionaries are preaching. Yet, because of sheer exasperation she brings to Paul and the others with him, she is silenced by the apostle to the Gentiles. She no longer has any gifts and is no longer able to navigate between her worlds of exploitation. She becomes out of work, out of sight and out of mind. The narrative Luke presents is mostly interested in upper-class women, who are presented as listening women whose behaviours are well within the bounds of expected societal norms. The slave women can be used and abused to advance the social and theological ideologies of the intellectual who wrote and edited this text for the benefit of his mostly educated Greek and Roman readers.

The themes developed in the book of Acts with regard to slaves are: violence is exercised against slaves, slaves are silenced, and slaves are used to advance particular theological and social/political agenda that takes no interest in them as violated bodies. Luke's message, in spite of its anti-imperial potential, contains, at least considered through the prism of the characterization of slave women in Acts, building blocks that may have helped pave the way for a Roman/Christian Empire. The characterization of the slave women in Acts may be read as normalizing how female slaves could be used and abused by Christian intellectuals in the myth-making processes of subsequent Christian "Acts" in order to advance their own theological conclusions. The

possibility of the Pentecost message, that they were all one together in unity and diversity, speaking the message of God in their specific languages, is muddled and unrealized. In the end, Luke's message is not about turning the tables of injustice against the violence of empire; it is a story about a crucified Jew preached by Jews and non-Jews, and accepted by Jews, Romans, and prominent Greek women, men, and others. Although slave women may be part of the group or preaching the right Christian message, they are still viewed as "Other" and need to be silenced.

Chapter 6

In this chapter on slaves in early Christian martyr narratives, I first considered Felicitas in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Then, I explored how she has been re-signified, reinterpreted, and reimagined in the *Acta*. Later in the chapter, I offered analysis regarding how Blandina is used and abused in the myth-making process of the Christian intellectual who developed this narrative. My argument is that the slaves are silenced even while they are presented. The *Passio* is deployed around the upper-class figures, in particular around Perpetua. Felicitas is presented as a sister in Christ, but she is one who is also a stranger to the *habitus* (embodied aptitudes, care, habit, custom, and representation) of the upper-class woman, Perpetua. Felicitas is presented as a sheer commodity and image enhancer, whose role is to serve as a background for Perpetua's transformations and triumphs, even when she dies. She battles and dies like a man in possession of *virtus* (physical courage and endurance). Contrary to the dignified image of Perpetua, Felicitas is presented in her vulnerability. She is presented as an exposed body leaking both milk and blood. Her death as a martyr is not recounted or remembered; the narrative ends as Felicitas stood as a lifeless figure waiting for the sword, just as the other silenced martyrs did.

I have used the term "haunted" to express my fascination with Felicitas, and how her ghostly presence may enable one to engage in probing the gaps, the silences, and the muted presences in the narrative. Something seems to be amiss not only with the narrative of the *Passio* as a whole, especially with regard to how the slave woman is portrayed throughout, but with how the narrative ends, leaving the reader baffled as to how the narrative concludes. The uneasiness I experienced before some of the problematic aspects of the *Passio* was, it seems, also an issue for some readers in the fourth century. The *Acta* were composed to explore how one may (re)imagine Felicitas. In other words, in keeping with my "haunted" imagery, the *Acta* sought to take a dead/ghost figure such as Felicitas seriously, and consider how the acts of (re)reading and of (re)signifying may complicate and disrupt the power dynamics as presented in the *Passio*. The reinvention of Felicitas in the *Acta* allowed her to be seen as more than a slave/object and victim of the violence of empire. In the *Acta*, she is depicted as someone with familial attachments,

agency, and as a person in possession of (manly) courage. I have proposed that the *Acta* may be read as texts of protest that stand in opposition to certain normative postures of Christian leadership. The identity and status of Felicitas as a slave is renegotiated and recalibrated to address other pressing theological arguments of the writers and editors.

In the later part of the chapter, I considered the slave Blandina. A template similar to the *Passio* narrative is presented: the Christian mistress is presented in an honourable fashion, whereas the slave Blandina is constructed as the one who can receive the terrifying blows of the Empire. Her body is theologized as the body of Christ. On her body, the theologians and intellectuals formulate their discourses. The interest is not in her mutilated slave body but in what that slave body offers to articulate a particular Christian rhetoric.

The themes developed in these texts are similar to the ones we have considered in the earlier chapters, and consistent with the overall argument of this book. Violence against slaves' bodies is taken for granted; there is no interest in slaves as humans, even when they are part of Christ-groups. Christian theologians take the bodies of the slaves as a canvas on which to paint their view of reality and to construct the grand myths underpinning their social and theological worlds, while showing no intrinsic interest in the slaves themselves. The intellectuals use God/Christ as theological hooks that serve their goals of reaching for power and that propel them to attain political positions in the Empire.

Chapter 7

In that chapter, I endeavoured to understand how the socio-rhetoric of a Christian philosopher of the early third century operates and how the process of silencing slaves functions in the *Acts of Andrew*. My particular interest was in probing the bodies of the slaves, especially the slave body of Euclia, to see how they have been used and abused in order to advance the theological aims and sociopolitical ideology of this Christian narrative.

The body of Euclia resembles that of the discarded body of the slave in *Ahiqar*. Both are disposed of to assure the continuation of a particular wisdom. In the case of *Ahiqar*, the unnamed slave is eliminated to preserve the life of a reputable, but falsely accused, former counselor of the king. In the *Acts of Andrew*, Euclia is mutilated to preserve the honour of a Christian mistress and restore order to a household on the brink of social collapse. The presence of the excellent counselor and the upholding of the dignity of the admirable wife of a proconsul are assured through the absence and subjugation of the slaves in the narratives. Both texts signify that slave bodies could be legitimately used for the greater good.

The *Acts of Andrew*, I proposed, articulates a rhetoric of empire not only in how it uses and abuses the slaves in the text, but also in how the dead bodies help the author to place a Christian and self-controlled virtuous "wo/man" at

the head of the proconsul's household. In this text, the author is imagining Christians at the center of political power and envisioning citizens of the Empire as Christian philosophers. The author proposes a Christian philosophy for the masses, but it is one most would have found difficult to practice. In this narrative, the author envisages a brave new Christian world, where slaves may be part of the new creation while remaining slaves and being treated as such. Members of the upper class would benefit from the abuse of the slave bodies so that they can keep their own souls unsullied. The slaves had a soul to be saved and a body to be enslaved for the benefit of a well-governed Empire composed of docile and law-abiding citizens.

The themes present in the *Acts of Andrew* are thus similar to those found in the other narratives. The slaves are silenced, their bodies utilized and brutalized as the means for advancing ideologies of power, while theological discourses are instrumentalized to advance social and political rearrangements that benefit the social groups to which their authors belong.

So what?

Why should a whole book be written about slaves as characters in the Pseudepigrapha and in some early Christian texts? Beyond the obvious answer that this is the first monograph to undertake such a challenge, I want to indicate several other reasons why this study is important.

- 1 This book has demonstrated a consistent pattern in how slaves are treated in a vast number of texts belonging to early Judaism and early Christianities.
- 2 This book has explored gaps and silences in these texts, and has activated these silences.
- 3 This study has shown how slaves have been used and abused in a variety of texts to advance the interests of the elite.
- 4 This monograph has teased out slave voices to understand various narratives from their perspective.
- 5 This book has established how narratives not only reflect societal mores, but may also envision other possible worlds.
- 6 This book has shown that narratives are essential to understanding the past, but critical/social and subaltern historians need to probe the interstices of what is represented and what is silenced.
- 7 This study has demonstrated that reading against the grain is an essential tool of the critical historian interested in uncovering voices that have been silenced in ancient texts.
- 8 This book shows how textual rhetoric has created the perfect template for the rise and the development of a specific Christian discourse regarding slavery. From this, it highlights the rationale for subsequent violence exercised against slave bodies and other bodies deemed vulnerable,

touchable, beatable, and exploitable in the implementation of the social visions belonging to some thinkers and theologians attached to a Christian Empire.

As I conclude this book on slaves in antiquity, I would like to share a question that lingered in my mind throughout my research and that still haunts me: For what contemporary blindness will we be judged by future generations?

Slavery is wrong, and it has always been so. I stand in solidarity with slaves of the past and of today.⁴ Slave bodies in texts as well as in life have been and continue to be used to advance the thirst for power of a wide spectrum of individuals and groups. Why and how do the texts studied in this book participate, in various ways and in different degrees, in normalizing the dreadful fate of human beings who are treated as disposable in the interests of different forms of “empire”? Why is it that slaves are rarely seen and paid attention to in our analysis? Why is it that we seldom activate silences in our scholarly reconstructions?⁵

In her Epilogue to her book, *Slaves and Other Objects*, Page duBois states: “The presence of ancient slaves has left its mark on the West, in its moment of legal, philosophical, literary, and artistic beginnings; yet they have often remained disturbingly unseen, disavowed, and invisible.”⁶ For the sake of understanding different texts and contexts of antiquity and engaging in conversations between ancient texts and the present, and in solidarity with the marginalized and the oppressed of the past as well as of today, I want to claim loudly and clearly: *The slaves must be seen and heard!*

Notes

- 1 Said, for example, articulates my overall theoretical framework very well when he states, “I’m interested in the tension between what is represented and what isn’t represented, between the articulate and the silent. For me, it has a very particular background in the questioning of the document. What does the document include? What doesn’t it include? That’s why I have been very interested in attempts of the Subaltern Studies Collective, and others, to talk about excluded voices.” See *The Edward Said Reader* (eds., Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin; New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 424.
- 2 Admittedly, the desire to deconstruct boundaries between various genres, groups and texts may have pushed me to try to cover too much in this book. The problem with such a broad scope is that it is simply impossible to extrapolate everything a text has to offer because of space limitations. The result is that one tends to focus more on some texts and less on others. Also, the nature of the project renders it difficult to have the chapters explicitly interact with each other. Some chapters lead beautifully to others in terms of how one builds into another; others do not. When one has a broad literary scope and an equally broad and complex theoretical spread as I have in this study, it becomes a real challenge to keep all the strands together.
- 3 *Jubilees*, 3 Maccabees and the *Letter of Aristeas* are placed within the second century before the Common Era, while the Sibylline Oracles, the *Testament of Joseph* and *Joseph and Aseneth* are situated in the early to late second century C.E.

Pseudo-Phocylides could be from the end of the first century C.E., and the *Sentences of the Syriac Menander* are accepted by various scholars as third-century compositions. None of these dates precludes one from considering the importance of these texts not only for their own historical and literary values, but also from understanding how and why some early Christ-groups would adopt and adapt these texts for their own theological views and understandings. Only the Wisdom Literature texts are outside this historical framework (fifth century B.C.E.). In addition, it is worth noting that most of these texts are from North Africa (Alexandria in Egypt, in particular), a region that played a considerable role in the spread of various Christ-groups and the development of divergent Christian theologies and philosophies (e.g. *Perpetua and Felicitas* and the *Acts of Andrew* are from the region). See among others François Decret, *Early Christianity in North Africa* (trans. Edward L. Smither; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009).

- 4 There are, sadly, more than 20 million people in forced labor today according to the International Labour Organization. The annual profits for such sordid activities (forced labor, human trafficking and slavery) are about US\$150 billion a year. See International Labour Organization (ILO), *Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2014), 1, 45.
- 5 See Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel, the Silencing of Palestinian History* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 6 Page duBois, *Slaves and Other Objects*, 221. Page duBois states elsewhere, “Our readings of history, especially of the Greek and Roman past, can never exhaust the richness of its legacies, for good and ill. Antiquity changes as the present changes, can never be caught in its entirety, made to surrender up its truths; it is not a dead past, but an ever-changing past that teaches us about the present and the future as much as about the remote past.” See Page duBois, *Slavery: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Ancients and Moderns; London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 143. See also Bernadette J. Brooten, ed., *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

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